THE

EVIDENCES

OF THE

JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN

REVELATIONS.

By the Rev. HENRY MURRAY, A. B.

DUBLIN:

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TO

HIS GRACE

JOSEPH,

LORD ARCHBISHOP OF TUAM.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR GRACE,

THE eighteenth century has produced a religious revolution in this country. Its commencement was an era of bigotry; its end is an era of toleration. If this change originated from active inquiry, we might well proclaim the progreſs of reaſon with generous triumph. But I fear that any acclamations on this ſubject would be the effuſions of an illuſory joy. The toleration of the preſent day, ſeems to be the toleration of indifference, not of Chriſtianity. Becauſe the magiſtrates of antiquity looked upon all the popular religions as falſe, but uſeful, ſo many amongſt us affect pre-eminence, by an imitation of thoſe philoſophic Worthies. Like them, they render that external homage to the Eſtabliſhment, which they would pay as unreluctantly to the religion of Mahomet, if it were ſanctioned by the laws.—If Chriſtianity be true, it is evident from its precepts, that this merely ceremonious compli-

ance

ance can never juſtify its votaries before God; and, therefore, I thought it of the moſt momentous conſequence to lay before thoſe perſons the falſity of their reaſonings, and the enormity of their error.

In the proſecution of my plan, I have ſtudied conciſeneſs, as far as it was conſiſtent with perſpicuity. The Theologian will find, that if I have availed myſelf of the labour of others, I have alſo thought for myſelf; and that I have endeavoured to form a ſyſtematic whole, from ſcattered materials.

Thus I have purſued the true deſign of a Dedication, by giving your Grace ſome account of the work which I lay before you, inſtead of fawning blandiſhment, and varniſhed eulogium, which (however well merited) have now, from repeated proſtitution, become ſuſpicious, bringing down the imputation of meanneſs on the author, and of vanity on the patron. I am,

My LORD,

With due Reſpect,

Your much obliged

and humble Servant,

HENRY MURRAY.

Aſhford,
Auguſt 30, 1790.

INTRODUCTION.

IT is not a rambling irregular life (1), of ill-connected notions, and fortuitous concluſions, which is adequate to the inveſtigation of truth: truth is the offspring of ſilence, unbroken meditations, and thoughts often reviſed, and corrected. A lover of truth ſhould, therefore, weigh evidences ſcrupulouſly. He is peculiarly bound to ſuch a procedure, ſhould his enquiry be in its nature difficult, and in its reſult, of the laſt importance to himſelf. Now, this is preciſely the caſe, with reſpect to the certainty of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian Revelations: a tedious deduction of hiſtoric evidence is neceſſary in both, and no man can ſay, that their truth or falſehood are to him matters of indifference.

The certainty of theſe is what I have propoſed to ſhew in this book, from which I truſt it will appear, how very ſlender a ſupport, that air of civil triumph, ſo often aſſumed by the patrons of infidelity, reſts upon. Indeed, true lovers of mankind, on finding the great evidences of revelation defective, would naturally have their writings and converſation fraught, like the roll of Ezekiel, with lamentation, mourning, and woe.

(1) Wollaſton's Relig. of Nat. Sec. 3.

Joy and exultation on ſuch an occaſion, can only be accounted for, by ſuppoſing the writer or ſpeaker to be a debauched deiſt, i. e. a practical atheiſt, and with ſuch perſons we are not to reaſon. They alone claim our regard, who acknowledge the grand fundamentals of natural religion, and who are ſeriouſly diſpoſed to receive the Chriſtian faith, if its evidence ſhould prove ſufficient to extort their aſſent.

THE

THE

EVIDENCES

OF THE

Jewiſh and Chriſtian Revelations.

SECT. I.

TO enter into abſtract queſtions, on religion in general, would be beſide our purpoſe. Religion follows neceſſarily from the attributes of God, and the nature of man: Deiſts, at leaſt in theory, admit this, and our immediate ſubject involves it. Without farther preamble, then, I ſhall take a conciſe ſurvey of natural religion. Some reflections on this head are neceſſary to evince before men of candour, that there is not that burning and ſhining light, that luminous certainty

 therein,

therein, which unbelievers aſſert. The cauſes of ſuch declarations are obvious. By ſaying that unaſſiſted human reaſon is commenſurate to all uſeful truths, they inſinuate that a revelation would be ſuperfluous. They ſhould know, however, that its inutility does not follow, though this favourite principle ſhould be eſtabliſhed; for what reaſon would compaſs after many efforts and painful reſearches, revelation effects at once. The principle itſelf would militate equally againſt the teaching of any art or ſcience. But whoſoever will judge equitably of the religion of nature, by forming his opinion from the writings of her ableſt followers, the pagan philoſophers, will never admit the principle. The practice of thoſe guides is undoubtedly the true criterion; yet it is a rule which few theiſts have followed. Their panegyrics on natural religion, reſemble thoſe ſplendid eulogiums, pronounced as academic exerciſes on deceaſed heroes, which affect ornament, rather than truth. They would incline you to believe, that her gentle ſway realized Arcadian manners, and the golden age.

However, this is far from being the language of the heathens themſelves, who ſeem to have felt ſenſibly their own deplorable ſituation. It is manifeſt, ſays one of them (1), that theſe things are to be done, which are pleaſing to the gods; but what theſe are, it is not eaſy to know, unleſs a man were taught them by God himſelf, or by ſome perſon who had received them from God; and he adds, that the Pythagoreans ſtudied divination as a means whereby to know the will of Heaven. Plato, in his ſecond Alcibiades, puts

(1) Jamblichus de vit. Pythag.

puts a like acknowledgment into the mouth of Socrates, who there owns the uſefulneſs of a divine inſtructor, and hopes that God would one day vouchſafe more light. (2) Maximus Tyrius argues well for the expediency of a revelation, becauſe of the defects in our natural powers. (3) Tully complains that the light of nature was extinct in his time, by corrupt cuſtoms and opinions. This conceſſion was made by that great maſter of morality in the Auguſtan age, an æra, in which philoſophy had exhauſted her powers. Neither can his aſſertion appear exaggerated, to a man acquainted with the philoſophy of the times. It is undeniably true, that the intimations of moral ſenſe, lay nearly undiſtinguiſhed in a heap of prejudices and aſſociations, inſomuch that ſuperficial obſervers have aſked, What is virtue? Their morality had therefore no baſis whereon to ground itſelf, and was remarkable by many an unſhapely excreſcence. No man can gainſay this, that vices were countenanced by law in ſome countries, owing partly, however, to the want of a proper authority, which might counteract the caprices of the legiſlator.

Religion and morals had hardly any connection in the Pagan world. They thought little of their relation to God, as a moral Governor. (4) Political utility, not truth, was the object of their religions, which conſiſted of ceremonies rather than opinions. They were not fitted to teach virtue. If a calamity happened, no reformation of manners was attempted; inſtead thereof,

(2) Diſſert. 26th. (3) Tuſcul. Quæſt. Lib. 3.
(4) Prieſtley's Inſtitutes, vol. 2.

thereof, a prieſt drove a nail into Jupiter's temple, or commanded a *lectiſternium*, i. e. that the images of the gods ſhould be carried in proceſſion. Some of their inſtitutions, ſuch as the Olympic games, had indeed an indirect tendency to promote morality; but this never was the main deſign of the founders. They contributed to it only eventually. Many perſons have believed, that the initiated in the myſteries, were taught to diſregard the fabulous deities, and to acknowledge the unity of the divine nature. But how can we accede to this opinion, ſince they excepted againſt Socrates, whom they muſt have reverenced highly on the above ſuppoſition, and ſince they were violent aſſerters of the popular belief? We ſhould think rather with Leibnitz, (5) that it was neceſſary to conceal the myſteries, to guard them from contempt. If any difficulties were elucidated in them, it is probable from a paſſage in Cicero (6), that theſe were ſuch as occur in the phœnomena of the univerſe, and that the nature of the gods was not regarded at all.

Certainly the blindneſs of heatheniſm almoſt tranſcends belief. After finiſhing Tully's Treatiſe de Naturâ Deorum, muſt not a theiſt exclaim, in the language of Cotta, "Moleſte fero, tanta "ingenia, in tam leves, ne dicam in tam in-"eptas ſententias incidiſſe." On other ſubjects, the Greeks and Romans talked like men; but on religion, they talked like children, even according to the principles of deiſm (7). Among them every thing was God, except God himſelf. He

(5) Eſſais Theodicè præfat. (6) De Nat. Deor. Lib. 2.
(7) Boſſuet's Introd. to Univ. Hiſt.

He was an *unknown God*, even at Athens. All nations repaired to Egypt for knowledge, where they worſhipped animals and plants. When you approached the temples of the Egyptians, ſays Celſus, every thing raiſed your admiration; —porticos, groves, baluſtrades, ceremonies full of devotion and myſtery; but when you examined the receſſes, you found that the object of worſhip was a cat, an ape, a crocodile, an hegoat, or a dog. I give this repreſentation, in the words of that adverſary to Chriſtianity, therefore, no one can ſuſpect that it is overcharged. Neither were the reaſons aſſigned for this worſhip, by that wiſe people, leſs ridiculous than the practice itſelf, one of which is (8), that their deities concealed themſelves in theſe animals, when men were numerous, and the gods few. What though many have ingeniouſly allegorized this worſhip, and ſhewn that men taught by ſymbols in theſe early times (9), Origen demonſtrates that the pagan fables under this pretext of allegory, corrupted the hearts of the youth, and inſtances the tablet of Chryſippus, which he ſaw at Samos, which decency forbids me to explain. Their interpretations of theſe fables were alſo often utterly inadequate. If, (10) ſays Euſebius, you ſuppoſe Jupiter to be the ſupreme intellect, how can it be affirmed that he is the ſon of Saturn, which they make to ſignify time? Or how can Juno, which they make the air or æther, be the wife and ſiſter of this vivific mind?

The

(8) Diod. Sic. Lib. 1. (9) Orig. con. Cel. Lib. 3.
(10) Præp. Evan. Lib. 3.

The learned and reflecting among the Gentiles were ſorely embarraſſed. Conſcious of being ſinners, they knew not how to make expiation, and have vented their complaints on that head. Theſe complaints were not ill-founded. Unbelievers muſt allow, that the methods taken to appeaſe the fabulous divinities, would be the very methods to put all affronts and indignities on the true God. The whole heathen world offered human ſacrifices, and no part more than the Britiſh iſles. What with ſhows of gladiators, and offerings to their gods, the blood of thouſands of human victims ſmoked around the altars of thoſe ſanguinary and malevolent deities. (11) Lipſius declares that twenty or thirty thouſand gladiators were ſlaughtered in a month; and adds, that no wars had ſo deſolated the world. It would argue ſtrange ignorance, to deny that theſe ſhows were introduced on a religious account. (12) They were deſigned to honour the manes of departed heroes. A ſpirit of cruelty pervaded all the pagan amuſements. (13) Even their plays familiarized the people to parricides and inceſts. At other times they were duped by the moſt puerile abſurdities. (14) The ſqueaking of a rat once compelled a man to reſign the office of maſter of horſe. They were the ſport of aſtrologers, magicians, fortune-tellers and augurs. Their ſpeculative opinions were ſo claſhing and inconſiſtent, that (15) Varro ſummed up 288 opinions about the *ſummum bonum*. It was a principle common to moſt philoſophers, that God was never offended with any one, therefore

(11) Saturnalia. (12) Kennet's Antiq. (13) Cypriani Epiſ. prim. (14) Valer. Max. lib. 1. (15) Auſtin de civ. Dei.

therefore there were no future puniſhments. The doctrine of the ſoul's immortality was loſing ground about the advent of Chriſt. Theſe two notions, with the denial of a particular Providence, overturned the foundations of religion on Pagan principles, which do not admit of a reſurrection properly ſo called.

Heatheniſh morality differed from that of the goſpel in many reſpects. It referred every thing to ſelf-intereſt, without regarding the glory of the ſupreme Creator. (16) It contained no precept about giving alms in ſecret, which is the true teſt of virtue. It rarely inculcated evangelical humility, and Jeſus Chriſt ſhook its whole frame, when he ſaid, "Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit." It omitted the authority of God, as a foundation for obligation, without which, you might as well talk of binding a giant by a with, as of curbing the imaginations of men. It gave its votaries little conſolation at the hour of death. Brutus cries, "I have worſhipped thee virtue as a real thing, but now I find, that thou art the child of fortune."

It is not denied, however, that many admirable rules are to be found united with this motley heap of opinions; but then it is improbable that they were invented by unaſſiſted reaſon. That whatever is good in the heathen religions, was borrowed from the traditions of the patriarchal times, is proved by Sir Iſaac Newton, in the latter end of the firſt chapter of his chronology. (17) The Greeks conſtantly acknowledged that they received much of their theology from Egypt;

(16) Seed's Sermons. (17) Leland's Chriſ. Rev. vol. 1.

Egypt; conſequently they were not indebted altogether to natural means: and the Egyptians confeſſed, that they employed themſelves rather in preſerving old traditions, than in reaſoning from effects to cauſes. It may be ſafely aſſerted, that there never was a nation guided merely by natural religion. Many, therefore, compliment it with the diſcoveries of revealed.

(18) "So modern 'pothecaries taught the art,
"By doctors bills to play the doctor's part,
"Bold in the practice of miſtaken rules,
"Preſcribe, apply, and call their maſters fools."

(19) He who travels a great way on a road in a day, is apt to applaud his own vigour, without conſidering what he owes to thoſe who drained the bogs, cleared the woods, and built the bridges; ſo it is with infidels, who think they owe to themſelves, what they borrowed from revelation. Its auguſt truths, when propoſed to right reaſon, do indeed command its approbation; but this is not a cauſe for making reaſon the inventor of them.

But let us ſuppoſe it adequate to frame a ſyſtem of duties, and ſtill it will appear, that this ſyſtem muſt be accompanied with a radical defect. It muſt want the ſanctions neceſſary for determining the will; it muſt reſt ſolely on the credit of the propoſers, who as they want authority to enforce obedience, their ſyſtem muſt reſolve itſelf into *counſel*, and ſo be of little uſe. Conceive our parliament, to enact good laws, without penalties annexed for the refractory, and you

(18) Pope's Eſſay on Crit. (19) Locke's Reaſon. of Chriſt.

you put a ſimilar caſe. Now a greater abſurdity can hardly be ſuppoſed, than to ſay that the beauty of virtue, and the fitneſs of things, are motives ſtrong enough to control the vicious appetites in either of the above caſes. They may pleaſe a reaſoner in the ſhade, while the paſſions are ſtagnant; but the bulk of mankind feel no emotions correſpondent to them, and are ignorant of their meaning: nay even the pious and refined, could they but trace their aſſociations to their firſt riſe, might find, that virtue was not loved by them, ſo much for itſelf, as from an experimental ſenſe of its good effects, and that they were induced originally to practiſe it, from the fear of puniſhment, or the hope of reward, though they might love it afterwards for itſelf alone.

It is clear, therefore, from all this, that heathen morality could not enforce itſelf. Ariſtotle's Ethics are perhaps the moſt conſiſtent of antiquity, but though in ſome caſes they may make a man perceive his duty, they cannot make him love and embrace it. The conſciouſneſs of this defect, involved the ſtoic philoſophy in a labyrinth of abſurdities. To ſupport the dignity of virtue, they were obliged, in defiance of common ſenſe, to pronounce their wiſe man happy, though diſtended on the rack, or tortured with diſeaſe. (20) The pagan philoſophers drew virtue amiable, but unendowed; many commended her, but few would eſpouſe her, till Jeſus Chriſt gave her a celeſtial dowry, viz. life and immortality.

So then, after allowing the clearneſs of the light of nature, it is ſtill found to be inſufficient.

But

(20) Lock's Reaſon. of Chriſ.

But it is wonderful that any man ſhould perſiſt to aſſert the like, who turns his eyes from the effulgence of the revelation which dazzles them, and caſts them upon regions not illuminated by the goſpel. Buried in the moſt deplorable ſuperſtition, theſe exhibit a ſtriking ſpectacle to the thinking philoſophic mind, which adores the unſearchable ways of God, while it gratefully receives thoſe beams of divine light, which ſhine out full upon our land. He will ſee, how by following this guide, the ingenious Chineſe have not in five thouſand years reaſoned themſelves into a true deiſtical notion of God, and how they expoſe above three thouſand children annually in the ſtreets of Pekin. He will ſee the ſage Bramin to rejoice, on thinking he can expire with a cow-tail in his hand, or after an ablution in the Ganges. Why are theſe things ſo? Why does not the poliſhed Faſtern at this day, tear down the idolatrous pagoda, that all may worſhip that one unoriginated eſſence, which the pretended philoſopher of Europe thinks he can diſcern almoſt by intuition? (21) Why was an heathen bigot forced to grant of old, that the religious principles of the Greeks, were drawn from mere conjecture?

Warranted, then, by experience ancient and modern, we may pronounce that there is an unſuitableneſs in our natural powers to deviſe a clear ſyſtem of duties; that the religion of nature is not calculated for the bulk of mankind; becauſe to trace doctrines to the fountain head is often difficult to the learned, and impracticable to the vulgar; and becauſe all perſons will be in ſome

(21) Porpherii Epiſt. ad Aneb.

ſome meaſure deterred therefrom, by ſecular cares and a propenſity to vice. (22) Hume himſelf acknowledges the inſufficiency of natural reaſon with reſpect to religion, as an inviſible abſtracted object cannot long actuate the mind, or be of moment in life. Take away revelation from natural religion, and it degenerates into cold ſpeculation, into chimeras. In the broad field of conjecture, every man has an equal right to take his own way, but the word of God is deciſive. There are nearly the ſame inconveniencies ariſing from natural religion, as aroſe from natural ſociety.

It may be aſked here, What then is the uſe of reaſon in religion? The anſwer is obvious. It prevents us from being impoſed on by falſe religions; by it we examine the evidences of the true; it acts the part of a critic, who, though he may be inſtructed by a good poet, can diſcern throughly the defects of a bad one: in fine, it exerciſes a judicial, tho' not a legiſlative power. Revelation preſuppoſes reaſon, and the man who declaims againſt its uſe, does a like thing, to him (23) who would adviſe you to put out your eye, the better to obſerve with a teleſcope the light of a remote ſtar. Revelation comes like a governor commiſſioned by a prince, who after ſhewing his letters patent in the aſſembly, preſides there ever after. As this governor cannot annul the original conſtitution of the aſſembly, ſo neither does revelation propoſe to annul the eternal verities made out *a priori*.

SECT.

(22) Eſſay 21ſt. (23) Locke's Eſſay, vol. 2.

SECT. II.

In the preceding ſection, we have ſeen, how natural religion, when left to itſelf, becomes not only inefficacious, but pernicious. It would have been better, for inſtance, not to have worſhipped any thing at all, than to have offered children to falſe deities. The religion of nature cannot be perfect, becauſe it cannot ſurpaſs human reaſon, which is imperfect.

When a man reflects on God's moral attributes, he is led to believe that theſe things were not ſo from the beginning, and that they argue degeneracy from a former ſtate. He muſt think it improbable, that ſupreme goodneſs would leave the world under inexplicable difficulties reſpecting their duty, particularly, as the knowledge and due adoration of the deity, appears to be the chief end of its formation. The moſt marked features of wiſdom are diſplayed in the creation, and it would be ſtrange indeed, ſhould the end be found defective, after ſo much ſkill was manifeſted in the means. For the gradation allowed of, is, that matter was made for men, and they for God. It is therefore highly unphiloſophical to ſay, that the mind was left originally incapable of attaining its end, while matter anſwered every purpoſe of its deſignation. While fit remedies were provided even for bodily diſorders, we may at leaſt infer that an equal proviſion was made for the maladies of the ſoul.

Agreeable to this theory, it is well known that there was hardly a nation which believed in the exiſtence of God, which did not at the ſame time believe

believe in ſome communication between the deity and them. Neither can it be wondered at if a divine interpoſition appeared ſo reaſonable among the nations. This alone can elucidate the ways of God. The ſoul of man, though acquainted ſufficiently with arts and ſciences, yet knows little of herſelf; ſhe knows not whence ſhe came, or whither ſhe goes; ſhe feels incomprehenſible contrarieties within herſelf, a law warring againſt the inclinations of the heart. What can lighten this darkneſs but revelation? Natural religion cannot throughly ſhew the obligations to virtue. (1) If it talks of a future ſtate, it muſt prove that the ſoul is diſtinct from the body, that it ſurvives it, and that it is conſcious of rewards and puniſhments. This is a perplexing taſk, certainly tranſcending the capacity of the vulgar, and probably that of the moſt ſublime and immortal genius. Revelation only can adminiſter hopes to man: for as there is nothing rewardable but his works, and as in this reſpect all fleſh is guilty before the Lord, there could be no proſpect of ſalvation, but a certainty of puniſhment, had not God revealed a ſupernatural way. No perſon could reſt aſſured, that repentance and amendment would atone for paſt faults. He muſt rather infer that they would not; for avoiding to run in debt in future, will never pay off an old account. (2) Beſides, it is unlikely that we ſhould know all our defects, prone as we are to fawn upon ourſelves, had not God delivered a law ſharp as the two-edged ſword, piercing to the very cloſeſt and moſt unſearchable corners of the heart; which the law of nature can hardly, and human

(1) Conybeare's Defence. (2) Hooker's Eccleſ. Pol.

human laws, by no means poſſible, reach unto. Again, revelation, by the amplitude of the objects it propoſes, can alone ſatisfy the mind; for this world is inferior to the ſoul, and cannot gratify it. The diſſatisfaction of ſuch ancient ſages, as had their hopes in this life, has been already expreſſed. 'Tis probable, that had they lived in our day, they would not have preferred torch-light to the ſun. They who made ſuch long voyages in queſt of knowledge, would have received it thankfully at their doors. In delivering their laws to mankind, they ſaw how utterly inadequate, the reaſon of things, and temporal ſanctions were, to procure a compliance; and ſo pretended almoſt univerſally to a divine revelation, diſpenſed either immediately to themſelves, or by ſome oracle, augury, or divination. From hence it undeniably follows, that they built upon a principle deeply laid in human nature; and that men are ſo framed, as not to be governed without ſome hopes and fears introduced in this manner. A deiſt muſt, therefore, make this conceſſion, highly derogatory from the dignity of God, that we are ſo formed, as to make it neceſſary to govern us by a lie.

But in no reſpect do the advantages of revelation appear ſo ſtriking as in its ſanctions. Theſe are particularly inſiſted on in the goſpel, wherein new moral rules are not ſo much delivered, as the practice of the old is enforced with ſtronger penalties, and greater certainty. Unſupported by theſe, the moral ſenſe would bend like a willow before the ſtorms of appetite. For the authority of natural law is defective; civil laws cannot perfectly rectify this, as the magiſtrates are ſo liable to be impoſed upon: beſides, all duties of imperfect

imperfect obligation, come not within the ſphere of their juriſdiction; though the violations of theſe duties are in their conſequences highly detrimental. Now if there be no religion, is there not an hiatus in God's adminiſtration? Has he not left his ſyſtem imperfect? I believe that if we reaſoned from the known attributes of God, and puſhed this argument to its full extent, it would end in ſomething ſtronger than a preſumption in favour of a revelation, as our natural light has been proved inſufficient to anſwer the purpoſes of religion. But it is not only for theſe more noble ends, but for others of a leſs weighty nature, that we muſt ſuppoſe a revelation neceſſary. (3) Muſt not the origin of language be referred to divine power, as you cannot account for ſociety before language, or language before ſociety, and as there is a ſubtle logic and ſo curious an analogy in the conſtruction of words? Muſt not the firſt man, or if you will, the firſt men, have been deſtroyed from a thouſand circumſtances without ſuch interpoſition? Would they not have eaten poiſonous fruits, walked down precipices, trod on fire, run into lakes, made no proviſion againſt change of ſeaſons prior to experience, which would have come too late as an inſtructor? (4) Diodorus admits the force of this reaſoning, when he repreſents the firſt men as periſhing, by myriads from theſe very cauſes. We do not leave our children to themſelves, and much leſs would ſo indulgent a father as God. As a child is kept under a nurſe for a while, till he is able to act for himſelf, ſo we may ſuppoſe that God interfered with the firſt

(3) Blair's Lec. vol. 1. (4) Lib. 1.

man; and did not abandon this large overgrown infant juſt after his creation.

From all theſe circumſtances, a reflecting ſober mind would look for an original revelation. Upon inquiry we find, in fact, that ſuch has been given, and that paganiſm was a hereſy of this primitive religion. Several doctrines univerſally received amongſt people, however widely remote, however barbarous or poliſhed, put this matter beyond all reaſonable doubt. (5) The general doctrine of providence, rebellion in heaven, a ſtate of innocence, the fall of man, atonement by ſacrifice, future retributions, is traditionary among all nations. (6) *Pudor circa res venereas*, ſolemnization of marriage, avoiding of inceſt, were almoſt univerſal cuſtoms. Selden, in the third chapter of his hiſtory of tythes, proves that Heathens, as well as Patriarchs, gave the tenth to God. Ten was a climacteric number among all people. Now concerning theſe received articles of belief, a difficulty utterly inexplicable, on the footing of infidelity, ariſeth. For moſt of theſe are matters totally indifferent in their nature; they are unconnected with any prejudices or feelings of the human heart, and can only be accounted for, by ſuppoſing them to have been delivered, to the firſt of men. They are not ſuch things as are made out by reaſoning, and they were taught before we have any light into antiquity. It is eaſy to conceive, that ſuch parts of this revelation, as preſcribed holineſs, and the other virtues, ſhould be, in proceſs of time, forgotten, whilſt thoſe other doctrines which had little influence on manners ſhould be remembered.

(5) Gillies Hiſt. of Greece. (6) Grotius de verit.

ed. Yet in the days of Homer, ſhadows and traces of theſe virtues may be found. So powerful was their efficacy as to counteract the ferociouſneſs of barbarous times; and the reader of the Odyſſey will find more true religion therein, than in the Auguſtan age. This is but imperfectly accounted for by thoſe who would make ſuch refinements reſult naturally from that period of ſociety.

The notions which remote antiquity entertained concerning God, might alone decide this argument. For as the idea of him is allowed not to be innate, nothing but an original revelation could have given the firſt men ſuch reaſonable thoughts concerning his nature. (7) Fear is inſufficient to create a Deity; ſavages cannot trace him by reaſoning from effect to cauſe. (8) Lord Bolingbroke ſhews that his unity was long preſerved among the nations. (9) The Aſſyrians firſt introduced idols; for the ancient Egyptians had none. (10) The Chineſe of old worſhipped Chingti, as the maker of heaven and earth. Nothing is more unqueſtionably clear in hiſtory, than that men have degenerated in their idolatry. When they firſt changed the Creator for the creature, they worſhipped the ſun and hoſt of heaven, then kings, then images, ſtocks, and ſtones. Now all this would have been juſt reverſed, on the ſuppoſition that men were left to themſelves, for as reaſon improved, ſo would their worſhip. At firſt they would have been poor ſorry creatures, like that untutored multitude ſpoken of by Diodorus, and would not

(7) Homes's Sketches, vol. 4. (8) Phil. Works, vol. 1.
(9) Lucian de Diis Syriis. (10) Le Compte Hiſt. vol. 3.

have reaſoned from effects to the prime mover in many ages. They would never have repreſented their firſt age as a golden one. Moſes alſo ſuppoſes a prior revelation in his law. The religion of the Jews is much older than the Moſaic oeconomy. The law given at Sinai, was little more than a code of civil policy. It was not ſo much from the law, as from the doctrine of their forefathers, that the Jews expected eternal life.

So then it was after the Pagans had blotted out the light of tradition, that they failed in darkneſs, and were ſhipwrecked. God did not hide a revelation from them, for many ages, as has been ſaid. They obſcured that which he gave, which in his goodneſs he has repeated over again; for nations, ignorant of letters, may, uſing their liberty, loſe a revelation, as they have loſt their hiſtory.

It appears that the Heathens were as rebels abandoned for a time, and ſuffered to make laws for themſelves, which might teſtify aloud to the world, that reaſon is too dim-ſighted to diſcern the things of God as they are; and that the glaſs of revelation alone can magnify ſuch objects to their due proportion. If ſhe has grown up at preſent, like a cedar upon the mountains, it is becauſe ſhe has been invigorated by this heavenly ſoil. It is to the ſpiritual eye, what a teleſcope is to the natural; both ſhew the heavens more glorious. It extends precepts farther, and exhibits them with greater clearneſs and accuracy, ſo that the moſt illiterate of the vulgar, who can repeat and underſtand the ten commandments, has, even according to a deiſt's

creed

creed, a better ſyſtem of duty than any old philoſopher.

From what has been ſaid hitherto, I ſhould at leaſt expect this conceſſion from an unbeliever, that as God's benevolence created man for moral perfection, and as their moral perfection depends much on their having right notions of the perfections of God, therefore, if the knowledge of theſe was perverted, or loſt, it is probable he would interfere for their reſtoration; and conſequently, when a revelation comes with all the authenticity of human teſtimony, conſiſtent in its parts, and not inconſiſtent with the knowledge which the glimmerings of natural religion afford us, it ought to be received; as I hope to ſhew that theſe requiſites are eminently conſpicuous in the Jewiſh and Chriſtian revelations.

SECT. III.

Though the reaſonableneſs of theſe revelations be not in itſelf a demonſtrative evidence of their truth, yet it is indiſpenſable, a *ſine quâ non*, before the conſideration of external evidences; as without this, arguments might be brought againſt them, *a priori*. Therefore the internal circumſtances, relating to theſe, is to be examined firſt.

I ſhall begin with the Jewiſh diſpenſation. (1) It cannot be denied by any one acquainted with ancient times, that while there was nothing in the world but ignorance and weakneſs among the people, impoſture in the prieſts, and uncertainty

(1) Abbadie's Truth of Chris.

tainty among the philoſophers, there was a nation of men, in the middle of the earth, who had finer notions of the Deity than Socrates or Plato: as of an everlaſting, infinite, ſimple, perfect, holy, happy being; not becauſe they were more polite, or more free from theſe paſſions which incline other men to ſuperſtition. (2) The Old Teſtament, by which they profeſſed to guide themſelves, unites in God the moſt incomprehenſible greatneſs, and the moſt marvellous grace and condeſcenſion; it teaches men to regard him as filling heaven and earth, and yet as humbling himſelf to behold what is done in both; as charging the angels with folly, which other nations adored, and as inviting them to worſhip him along with men. The poetry of the Hebrews is not deſigned, like that of the heathen nations, to celebrate the amours and feats of fictitious deities; but to inſpire the nobleſt ideas of God, and to contain the moſt elevated deſcription of his glory and perfections.

If like thoughts on the unity, omnipreſence, and omniſcience of God, were to be found in the writings of Homer or Cicero, their ſayings would have been tranſcribed a thouſand times, and quoted upon all occaſions; but from a ſtrange and unaccountable perverſeneſs, the Jewiſh legiſlator is diſregarded, from a circumſtance which ſhould enhance his value, and that is, becauſe his ſentiments are recorded in the volume of eternal life. In other ſtates, religion was the tool of policy; in the Jewiſh, every thing was ſubordinate to religion. Every inſtitution, their ſabbaths, their three annual meetings,

(2) Leland's View, &c. vol. 2.

ings, their offerings of their firſt fruits of fields, gardens, and vineyards, all tended to promote ſome virtue, and were an acknowledgment that God was the giver of all. Origen challenges antiquity to ſhew a commonwealth ſo admirably conſtituted as that of the Jews; they had no public ſhews, boxing, horſe or chariot races: their amuſement was to go up before the Lord to Shiloh, with their children. Mercy and charity were better attended to, than in any civil conſtitution in the ancient world. There were few harlots among the daughters of Iſrael. Sampſon was obliged to go down to the towns of the Philiſtines, to ſatisfy brutal deſires. It puniſhed adultery with death, becauſe it is an irreparable offence, but theft with only a four-fold reſtitution, or ſervitude. (3) The form of a free and equal government erected among the Jews, differed in every reſpect from any thing ever ſeen in the eaſt, where kingly authority and tyranny were univerſal. (4) Slavery was milder among them than in any other nation. (5) Maſters had no deſpotic power over their ſervants; if through paſſion they deprived them of the uſe of any member, this ſet them free. The laws of war, fierce as they were in thoſe early days, were ſoftened among the Hebrews. They were to ſmite the males only; they were to attack no nation unprovoked, and even when inſulted, they were to ſummon them to ſurrender, before an aſſault. The law of Jubilee precluded any man from acquiring land enough to endanger the liberties of his country; and the prieſts could not be

(3) Prieſtley's Inſtit. vol. 2. (4) Lettres de quelque Juives.
(5) Locke on Govern.

be dangerous, as poſſeſſing hardly any lands at all, but depending upon others. Their genealogical tables prevented lawſuits. They differed moreover, from all the Eaſterns, in prohibiting marriages within certain degrees of conſanguinity; for the marriage of the neareſt relations was permitted in the eaſt, though in the weſt it was not ſo. Surely, deiſts ſhould have a reverence for Moſes, who eſtabliſhed ſuch regulations in an idolatrous world, together with the worſhip of that one God, whom they profeſs to adore.

(6) As to the goſpel, when a man hears many of its precepts, he is ready to cry out, *Nec vox hominem ſonat.* (7) It is the glory of the Chriſtian religion, as preſcribed in the New Teſtament, that the piety it teacheth is ſolid and rational, remote from all ſuperſtitious extremes and falſe refinements, worthy of a God of infinite wiſdom and goodneſs to require, and becoming the true dignity of a reaſonable nature. The motives therein propoſed are the moſt efficacious that can be preſented to the human mind; in a word, ſo perfect an idea of religion is contained in theſe writings, that all attempts to add to it, in ſucceeding ages, have really fallen ſhort of its original excellence, and tended to tarniſh its primitive beauty. This is no more than what deiſts themſelves acknowledge; ſome of them have declared that it is a republication of the law of nature. It hath aboliſhed polygamy entirely among its votaries, and ſlavery in a great degree, whereby it gives liberty to thouſands. Women are peculiarly bound to love Chriſtianity.

(6) Lord Bacon on the advanc. of learn. (7) Leland's View, &c.

anity. Rouſſeau confeſſes that the mildneſs of modern governments are owing to it, not to letters. Letters were cultivated at Athens, in Egypt, at Rome, in China, and yet humanity was much oftner violated. (8) It is a ſtranger to deſpotiſm; it would not have princes concealed in ſeraglio's from their ſubjects; it prevents them from murdering their brothers like Mahometans; it inſpires confidence between a prince and his people. The contraſt is ſtrong in Æthiopia and the adjoining countries. It prevents the maſſacres made by Greek and Roman generals; by Ghengis-kan and Tamerlane in Aſia; it has ſoftened the features of war, leaving to the conquered, life, liberty, laws, wealth. How admirable is that religion, which, while it ſeems to have in view only the happineſs of another life, conſtitutes the felicity of this! All the duties are ſublimed in the goſpel; the marriage duties, thoſe between ſervants and maſters, kings and their ſubjects. It extorted the praiſes of Julian himſelf. (9) He ſpeaks of its profeſſors, as kind to ſtrangers, as careful of their dead, as holy in their lives, as maintaining their own and the heathen poor. (10) Ammianus commends Chriſtianity, as teaching whatever was juſt and lenient. We hear of no hoſpitals on the earth till its introduction. It is friendly to learning and the arts, the relics of which it ſaved from Barbarian rage. It does at this day prevent our ſons and our daughters from paſſing through the fire; it perhaps ſaved many of its adverſaries from being expoſed to periſh, when infants, and from fighting

(8) Monteſquieu l'Eſprit des Loix. (9) Juli. Op. Epiſ. 49. (10) Am. Mar. Lib. 22.

fighting as gladiators, when adults. No man is to imagine that the progreſs of civilization would have ſtopped theſe enormities; theſe were practiſed by people as refined as we, by Rome and Carthage; nay, it has been proved (11), that it was after refinement had reached its zenith, that ſuch proceedings were ſanctioned by the laws, and countenanced by the magiſtrate.

Indeed we might juſtly expect ſuch effects from the ſcriptures; they ſet virtue on its true foundation, not like the philoſophers, who would make men love an empty idea, not a ſubſtantial good. I have (12), ſays the great Sir Matthew Hale, been acquainted ſomewhat with men and books, and have had long experience in learning and the world. There is no book like the Bible for excellent learning, wiſdom and uſe; and it is want of underſtanding in them, who think or ſpeak otherwiſe. In ſublimity, its poetic parts ſtand unrivalled. What a puny contraſt is Neptune in his chariot, and bounding ſteeds, to Jehovah, making darkneſs his pavillion, riding upon the wings of the wind, or upon the heavens, as upon a horſe, and filling both them and the earth with his glory! Its writers ſeem to have imitated none before them. How comes it, that they alone had low ideas of the divinities of the pagans, calling them, *vain things* and *abominations?* that they did not worſhip ſtars, like the Chaldeans; the goat or crocodile, like the Egyptians, nor men and genii, like all other nations? How comes it, that they forbid all communications with ſorcerers and ſpirits, calling witchcraft *lying vanities?* How comes

(11) Lel. Chriſ. Rev. (12) Letter to his Son.

comes it, that, on deiſtical principles, they were inviolate in the general contagion? There ſeems to be only one way of accounting for it, viz. That God gave Jacob his laws, and Iſrael his ſtatutes. It is my decided opinion, that if a genuine admirer of truth, who had peruſed nothing but the ſpeculations of philoſophers, ſhould at length come to read Moſes and the New Teſtament, he would wonder much, and confeſs that the authors were the greateſt of philoſophers; but that on hearing of the humble ſtation of Jeſus and his followers, his aſtoniſhment would redouble. He would confeſs that the Bible gives the knowledge of the unity of God; that if any part of the Chriſtian world is corrupted, it is for want of reading the ſcriptures; that if the infidel has any ideas of a fountain of life, power and happineſs, any notion of a ſyſtem of duties owed to his Maker, it is becauſe he has lighted his candle at this reſplendent ſun, which he ſo vainly endeavours to extinguiſh.

If a deiſt, on reviewing what is called the internal evidence, ſhould acquieſce in acknowledging its worth, he ſhould then aſk himſelf, whether it may not be inconſiſtent in him, to allow that the world is the workmanſhip of God, becauſe he ſees goodneſs, wiſdom and power diſplayed therein, while he rejects a revelation, having the ſame features, and aſcribes the effect to ſo inadequate a cauſe, as an illiterate nation, and a few fiſhermen. On cool reflection, he may think this unphiloſophical; at any rate it muſt induce him to lend an attentive hearing to the external evidence upon which we are now about to enter.

SECT

SECT. IV.

THAT there is ſuch a book at preſent as the Old Teſtament, and that it was written in an age widely removed from ours, cannot be denied by any one who pretends to reaſon. The Jews, Heathens, Chriſtians and Mahometans, have invariably believed that Moſes was the author of the firſt five books thereof, and that the other parts were written by prophets, whoſe names are in general prefixed to their ſeveral works. Thus, we have univerſal conſent in favour of Moſes. If the teſtimony of the Jews ſtood alone, a man would naturally imagine that we ſhould pay the ſame deference to it, which we pay to other ancient nations, vouching for the authenticity of their own writings. It would be reckoned highly diſingenuous, to affirm, in contradiction to the authority of the Greeks, that the works aſcribed to Heſiod are not his. However, deiſts have not ſcrupled to adopt ſuch a conduct; well aware, that if Moſes be allowed to be the author of the Pentateuch, their ſcheme muſt be abandoned; becauſe it is abſolutely impoſſible to ſuppoſe, that he would make ſo marked and public an appeal to the miraculous facts therein contained, and build his whole law on them, if no ſuch facts had ever happened. They have endeavoured, therefore, almoſt univerſally, to aſcertain ſome later period to which theſe books may be referred; but upon this, as might be ſuppoſed, they are not agreed. When Harduin, in defiance of the ſanction of ages, would have perſuaded men that a great part of the

the claſſics was forged by Monks, he could only ſcatter about ambiguous inſinuations, concerning fictions and dark times, to ſupport ſo ſtrange an allegation. Unbelievers are preciſely in a ſimilar predicament, aſcribing the old law to various times and perſons, as to Ezra, to Joſiah, to they know not whom. We ſhall now examine upon what foundation theſe mere aſſertions reſt.

It cannot be ſaid, that the Jews were prone to adopt books as divine, without examination. They rejected the Apocrypha, which is a continued eulogium upon this people, deſcribing them as contending manfully with powerful monarchs, for their laws and religion; whilſt the books which they have admitted, repreſent them as rebels to both. It cannot be denied, that an attempt to impoſe writings upon a nation, containing their hiſtory, their civil and eccleſiaſtical polity, would be conſidered as a chimerical project. But if this hiſtory and theſe laws ſhould be found agreeable neither to the paſſions of the princes, prieſts, or people, ſuch a ſcheme becomes utterly improbable. This improbability is, if poſſible, heightened in the preſent caſe: for, as the Iſraelites were early ſettled in the land of Canaan, a man muſt believe that they had always ſome form of government, which would make a change in aftertimes harder, particularly as the laws in the Pentateuch are ſo ſtrict about property. Beſides, it well deſerves the reader's attention, that no valid reaſon has been given, why any perſon or perſons ſhould beſtow the immenſe pains, evidently neceſſary for compoſing the law and the prophets. All fictions have an end and deſign. The author of this would, therefore, have conſulted either his own

own reputation, the reputation of the Levites, of his nation, or their anceſtors. But who can aſſert that Ezra conſulted his own fame? The only encomium paſſed upon him in the whole ſcripture is, that he was a *ready ſcribe in the law of Moſes*; too ſmall a compliment ſurely, to engage him in ſo arduous a work. Who can aſſert that he conſulted the honour of the prieſts and Levites? The inhumanity of their anceſtor to the Shechemites, is related with every aggravating circumſtance. He is called by his father an inſtrument of cruelty, who declares that he will be divided in Jacob, and ſcattered in Iſrael. Agreeably to this declaration, the Levites had no portion of inheritance among their brethren, but are claſſed (1) among the ſtrangers, the fatherleſs and the widows, as objects worthy of commiſeration. The negligent conduct of the prieſts in the time of Joaſh, their impieties and debaucheries under Eli, is not the language of one who courted ſacerdotal applauſe. As to the national character of the Jews, it is unneceſſary to tell either Chriſtians or Infidels of their ingratitude, ſtubbornneſs and idolatry: theſe have been a topic for ridicule among the latter. Neither are their patriarchs or chief worthies without blemiſh. The failings of each are minutely ſet down, whilſt their virtues are of ſuch a kind, as would not acquire any extraordinary veneration from Gentiles, who would look rather for heroes of ancient renown, than for ſhepherds of courteous benevolent demeanour. The prophecies which paſſed among the Hebrews for divine, were directly oppoſite to their favourite propenſities. Theſe foretell,

(1) Deut. chap. 14.

foretell, in plain terms, the calling of the Gentiles, the rejection of the Jews, and above all, the mean estate of the Messiah. (2) " O daughter " of Jerusalem, thy King cometh to thee lowly, " and riding upon an ass." Who is so ignorant of Jewish prejudices, as to think that this could be the native effusion of a Jew. In short, their prophets are full of denunciations against kings, priests and people. The laws by which they were guided, were not more agreeable. These are such as no people, if left to themselves, would receive, or no man think of imposing. Would any man, for instance, make a law, that their ground should remain unsown every seventh year; that they should leave their frontiers unguarded three times annually, after having provoked the neighbouring nations; that they should be separated from all intercourse with the heathen, by ceremonies, which made them odious to others, and were a burthen to themselves? If, indeed, you suppose the legislator assured of providential interposition, the whole is reasonable; while, on the contrary hypothesis, nothing can be more irreconcileable with every idea of policy and common sense. It is not thus that men forge. There are some forgeries, in which, as no one has an interest in their truth, falsehood may pass undetected: but these books were the deeds by which the Jews held their estates, and by which all matters of plea, ecclesiastical and civil, were decided. There was no action, nay scarce a thought of any individuals within that community, which some law or other does not respect: so that a man who can believe that our

(2) Zech. 9 chap. 9 verse.

our ſtatute books and our New Teſtament could be impoſed fraudulently upon us, may believe alſo, that the Old Teſtament was paſſed upon them at their return from captivity. Beſides, ſuppoſing it poſſible that their laws and cuſtoms were changed after that period; if we reaſon from analogy, we muſt ſuppoſe that they, like other nations, would have adopted the laws of their conquerors, not ſuch as they did. We ſhould have had their adoration directed to two principles, to fire, and to the hoſt of heaven; we ſhould have had no temples built to God; but ſacrifices offered on high places. It is alſo worthy of remark, that from changes of circumſtances, ſeveral of their laws were uſeleſs from that time, as (3) Maimonides has obſerved. It is therefore unreaſonable to believe that Ezra was the author of theſe laws; or that a ſtiff-necked and rebellious people would ſubmit tamely to ſuch an egregious impoſition.

To make the abſurdity of this hypotheſis ſtill more flagrant, I wiſh much that a man would read over the book, of which, both Chriſtians and Deiſts allow Ezra to be the author, I mean that which bears his name. It would not require much candour to draw from him an acknowledgment, that, on the ſuppoſition of an impoſture, it is moſt injudiciouſly planned. He begins it by declaring, that the people were claſſed according to their tribes; that there was a genealogy of the prieſts; that they and the Levites were divided according to their courſes; that they looked for *urim* and *thummim*; that there was an altar built according to the law; morning

(3) Anc. Un. Hiſ. vol. 3.

morning and evening ſacrifice; the feaſt of paſſover and unleavened bread; and that theſe things were obſerved before he came from Perſia at all; i. e. he ſuppoſes they obſerved the eſſentials of this law, which, however, he was to forge afterward. I beg that the deiſtical reader will conſider this, and then aſk himſelf whether it be poſſible that ſuch open and capital deceptions could be played off againſt any people with ſucceſs.

Though he may allow this to be impracticable, yet he may ſtill wiſh to perſuade himſelf, that a project ſo difficult might have been carried by temporizing with, and flattering all parties. But this cannot be ſaid in the preſent caſe. He did not temporize with the rich (4), becauſe they were compelled to reſtore the lands of the poor which they had engroſſed; which they certainly would not have done, if they knew that the law ordaining this reſtitution was forged. (5) See how many reaſons are aſſigned by Montague, to account for the rich and powerful of Sparta reſigning their lands, not one of which can apply in the preſent inſtance. (6) He did not temporize with the prieſts or people, for he forced them to put away their ſtrange and idolatrous wives which they had married contrary to the law, and he has even made the names of the principal delinquents public. Undoubtedly, men wounded in ſo tender a point, would gladly have detected any forgery or alteration in the canon.

(4) Nehem. 5 chap. (5) Riſe and Fall of Anc. Rep.
(6) Ezra, 9 chap.

It is natural to think alſo, that if he conducted his ſchemes by the arts of adulation, he muſt have complimented the Benjamites, for their tribe formed a very reſpectable portion of the remnant which returned: yet this does not at all accord with the account given of their conduct, in the caſe of the Levite of Ephraim, for which enormity, their whole body was extirpated, except ſix hundred men. In every point of view, this hypotheſis of a fiction is irrational. If Ezra forged the ſcriptures, where did Nehemiah get the zeal, which prompted him to throw up the high office of cup-bearer to the Perſian king, to bear affliction with the people of God? How came it to paſs, that ſuch refractory Jews, as refuſed to conform to his regulations, ſet up the ſame law elſewhere? How came it to paſs, that they who remained in the diſperſion, ſent their offerings to Judea, and went up in after-times to worſhip according to that law, at great trouble and expence? Why did the Hebrews bear up againſt ſuch oppoſition in building their temple, and ſoon after undergo death in great numbers, for adhering to this law, i. e. to an impoſition, which they muſt have known to be ſuch? It has been aſſerted, that the Jews loſt their language in the captivity, and that they were the moſt barbarous of mankind at that period. Theſe two aſſertions, though advanced for a different end, would, if true, prove that no man could write in that variety of ſtile obſervable from Moſes to Malachi; as alſo, that thoſe ſtupid Jews could not be the authors of their own admirable laws. Thus, it often happens that the overweening imaginations of infidelity, recoil upon itſelf. But it cannot be ſaid

that

that their language was loſt at that period. Tho' the captivity from the time of Jehoiakim laſted ſeventy years, yet from the utter deſolation of the temple, and the laſt carrying away, it endured but about fifty; ſo that ſuch of them as were ſeventy or eighty at their return, had been twenty or thirty when they were tranſplanted. Ezekiel, Zechariah, Haggai and Malachi, wrote their prophecies in Hebrew, about this time. It would certainly be a hardy aſſertion to ſay, that Ezra *might* have written theſe under their names. To paſs his own for the works of cotemporaries, would be too flagrant a deceit. It would be quite irrelative to his deſign to ſay that ſuch men lived, and wrote at that era, if they never wrote at all. A child muſt have ſeen the folly and inutility of ſuch an attempt, and much more Ezra, who, on the ſcheme of infidelity, muſt have been artful indeed. I entreat unbelievers to conſider, whether it be at all probable that he would do this, or that he would invent Daniel's prophecies, and yet ſuppoſe them to have been given publicly at Babylon; or that he would have invented Cyrus's decree, which, according to their ideas, he muſt have done, becauſe the ſcripture is referred to therein. From the teſtimony of the Jews, and ſuch ancients as have inveſtigated the ſubject, we are informed that he changed the old Hebrew character for the preſent Chaldaic, becauſe the latter was better known to the people, and is more elegant and convenient, as may be ſeen by a compariſon. It is doubtful whether he interſperſed elucidations, ſuch as putting the modern names of places for the ancient, and ſo on, becauſe theſe may be in general otherwiſe accounted for. But

if he did, this very procedure is a new proof that he was no impoſtor, as he would ſcrupulouſly have avoided what would ſo obviouſly detect him. From the old Hebrew or Samaritan letters, not being uſed after the captivity, we are ſupplied with another proof. In theſe ages, ſhekels are dug up in Paleſtine, having *Jeruſalem the holy*, inſcribed upon them in this old character; theſe muſt therefore be older than Ezra, and conſequently the Jews regarded themſelves as a peculiar and holy people before his days. (7) Gibbon thinks that the Æthiopians learned the diſtinction of meats, and the ſabbath from the Jews, who, in a *very early period*, ſettled on the ſides of the Red Sea. But there ſtill remains one unanſwerable argument to ſhew that Ezra could not invent the Old Teſtament, and that is, the many plain prophecies contained therein, which have been wonderfully fulfilled ſince, and are fulfilling at this day. This is a proof which all the ſophiſtry of the ſons of men can never evade.

The foregoing reaſon is equally concluſive againſt Joſiah, or any other perſon. The only poſſible pretext for ſuch an imputation againſt this prince, is, becauſe he rent his clothes at the reading of a copy of the law, taken out of the ruins of the Lord's houſe. His two immediate predeceſſors, Manaſſes and Ammon, outdid all who went before them in wickedneſs. It is believed, therefore, with great reaſon, that it was the fear of one of thoſe, which made the prieſts take the original copy of the law, *written by the hand of Moſes himſelf*, out of the ſide of the ark, and

(7) Decline and Fall, &c. vol. 2.

and hide it. This being found again as they were repairing the temple, it drew tears from that pious and tenderhearted king, to hear the terrible denunciations therein contained againſt the ſins of his people. It is very probable, that he was not fully aware before this time, of the heinouſneſs of thoſe enormities in the ſight of God; for being the ſon of an idolatrous father, he muſt have been taught of courſe, to diſregard the ſacred books: Or he might have heard before what affected him ſo much when read by Shaphan. We know how often men are ſtruck with the ſolemn reading of a paſſage. Now what foundation is here for ſuppoſing an impoſture? Is it likely that any king would let this paſſage be inſerted in a forged book, viz. (8) that he was to write out a copy of it with his own hand, and read it all the days of his life, that he might learn to fear the Lord his God, and that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren? But we can ſhew demonſtratively that the law exiſted antecedent to this period. (9) Three reigns before Joſiah, Hezekiah employed men to copy the ſcriptures. In his time the ten tribes were carried away captive. The colony ſent by Eſarhaddon in their room, were infeſted with wild beaſts. Being poſſeſſed of the heatheniſh notion of local Gentilitial deities, they were indulged in the belief that worſhipping the God of the land would rid them of theſe plagues. Upon making application to the king of Aſſyria, he ſent them a prieſt from among the captives, who inſtructed them in the law of Moſes, to which they have adhered from that time

(8) Deuteronomy 17 c. (9) Proverbs 25 c.

time to the preſent. At this very day, their deſcendants are to be met with on Mount Gerizim in Paleſtine, and from them it was, that the great primate Uſher procured, by the means of Mr. Davis of the factory at Aleppo, the celebrated copy of the Samaritan Pentateuch. From their firſt ſettlement in that country, a moſt rooted enmity ſubſiſted between them and the Jews; they never coaleſced; ſo that we have here a diſtinct, independent teſtimony, that theſe books were in being, and received as divine, at leaſt in Hezekiah's reign. Some Chriſtian refiners have thoughtleſsly imagined that the Samaritans had no written law before the captivity, though they allow that they had practiſed its ordinances. But whoever will ſee this notion unanſwerably confuted, let him read the ſecond book of Baſnage's Hiſtory of the Jews, or Morinus's two Letters to Vandale.

From Hezekiah to Moſes, I do not learn that any have attempted to find room for an impoſition. If David or Solomon had attempted one, it is clear that Jeroboam, who hated their race, would have detected it, and have uſed it as a moſt ſubſtantial reaſon, why his ſubjects ſhould not go up to the annual feſtivals at Jeruſalem. He would pay no reſpect to their memory. He would not, as he did, appoint the obſervance of theſe ſame feaſts at Bethel, nor conform to that law in almoſt every particular, except in the matter of the calves. This was a caſe too, in which he might reckon upon the hearty concurrence of his people; for if they had one favourite propenſity above another, from their ſettlement in Canaan to the Babyloniſh captivity, it was for the idolatry, and the lewd worſhip of the neighbouring nations. It happens luckily

luckily for us, that there were always perſons, whoſe intereſt it was, to detect the Jewiſh ſcriptures. In the Chriſtian era, Julian and Celſus; before that, the Alexandrian Jews who ſhewed ſo vehement a deſire to coaleſce with the heathen; the perſecutors under Antiochus; the Samaritans, Jeroboam, and the impious kings.

I think that a careful reader of the Pſalms of David, would look upon it as a very hardy aſſertion, to ſay there was no law exiſting when theſe were compoſed. They are ſo pictureſque, abound ſo much with incidents and images borrowed from it, that it is difficult to conceive how an impoſtor could ſucceed ſo well, or would take all this trouble; particularly, as it cannot be thought, that theſe were, in any conſiderable degree conducive, to his main deſign. The careful reader will alſo be of opinion, that if the Pentateuch had been written after the time of Moſes, there would not have been ſuch large directions about the conſtruction of the tabernacle, the manner of carrying it, their encampments and marches in the wilderneſs. He will conſider moreover, that from the death of Moſes till the diviſion of the tribes, indeed till the advent of Jeſus Chriſt, there were ſchiſms which made forgery and corruption impracticable. No man had authority enough to lay ſuch a yoke upon them; for as the tribes were independent of each other, if one received it, another would not; even they on whom it was impoſed would caſt it off with execration, on the earlieſt opportunity. They would not recur to it again, as the only means of ſaving them from utter deſtruction, which, however, we know they often did. (10) The

(10) Lel. view, vol. 2.

The Jews by their genealogies could trace up to the very time when their conſtitution was eſtabliſhed

We have ſhewn already that if the Old Teſtament was feigned, we might expect to find it very different from what it is. We ſhould have heard nothing of David's murder, adultery, or the blemiſhes of the Patriarchs; in ſhort, we would not find therein many things which a zealous Jew would have ſuppreſſed, and few things which a zealous Jew would have inſerted. We would not find line upon line, and precept upon precept; we would not find the parentheſis and tranſpoſitions which ſhew the venerable antiquity of the book; we ſhould have few wonders recorded in it; for had any perſon invented books, in the name of Moſes and the prophets, filled with miraculous accounts, and advanced them as facts of public notoriety, they would have brought with them their own condemnation. We would not have had the book of Ruth. What could an impoſtor deſign by writing it? It does no honour to David's family, and is only uſeful for deducing the genealogy of the Meſſiah. The ſame may be ſaid of the 38th Chap. of Geneſis, which ſtands unconnected with what goes before and follows after, and is ſerviceable only for the ſame purpoſe as the former, for to an attentive obſerver, the whole law and prophets picture out Jeſus Chriſt.

The great number of particulars of time, of place, of perſons, mentioned in ſcripture, ſhew their genuineneſs. Forgers ſedulouſly avoid theſe, as being the beſt way of detecting them. Had the Bible been of later date than we ſay, the framers

framers of it muſt have betrayed themſelves by faults againſt chronology, hiſtory, manners and cuſtoms. It is thus all legends, though invented by artful men, have been diſcovered. Though Xenophon endeavours to gloſs over the Perſian education and hiſtory, yet, ſays *Gillies*, he is not able to adhere perfectly to the ſemblance of truth. It is impoſſible to diſguiſe a whole narrative. (11)

If one man had forged the Old Teſtament, how could he be pure and noble with Moſes, ſublime with Iſaiah, pathetic with Jeremiah, pompous with Ezekiel, obſcure with Hoſea, and rough with Amos? If you ſuppoſe a number of men concerned, the difficulty of concealing the forgery increaſes. But if any body of men had done ſo, a perſon muſt think it was for ſome valuable conſideration. Now who would undertake this? Not the Levites, not the prieſts, not the great council, not the kings; for if any of theſe had, they would have ſecured ſome thing for their own excluſive aggrandizement, as all forgers have done; yet in this caſe it is not ſo. There cannot, therefore, be greater folly than to ſuppoſe ſo many perſons labouring to impoſe books for no end.

From the variety of phraſe and ſtile ſo conſpicuous in the ſacred volume, from the alluſions to different manners, and diſtinct periods of ſociety, it manifeſtly cannot be the work of one man, or of one age. There is a connection in the Jewiſh hiſtory. Joſhua teſtifies of Moſes, the judges of Joſhua, Samuel of the judges, the prophets

(11) Lettres de quelques Juives.

prophets of him: each book preſuppoſes thoſe which went before; each acquieſces in what others had ſaid, which is unprecedented. (12) Now, when it is conſidered, that the whole was written by ſeveral hands ſucceeding each other, at great intervals of time; and that an unity of deſign is carried on throughout, the ſcheme of impoſture becomes inadmiſſible. Impoſtors would look for credit by novelty, by ſetting up for themſelves, and having no regard to what went before. (13) Examine the opinions of the Greek and Roman ſages, and obſerve what diſcordant opinions they entertain, on almoſt every point of theology and philoſophy. But here there is a perfect harmony between writers living at a great diſtance of time from each other, and handling a great variety of arguments. (14) *Omnibus eſt idem vigor et cæleſtis origo.* The theme of all, is the glory of God, and the good of mankind. They think that the greateſt praiſe they can give their worthies, is, to let it be known that they were beloved of God. There is no envying their predeceſſors, no looking for praiſe by inſinuations that one had corrected the errors of the other, or finiſhed what he left imperfect. They take no merit for obliging poſterity: on the contrary, they give you to underſtand that they were compelled to write, therefore they do not look for praiſe. (15) A man might be challenged to ſhew where the ſacred hiſtorians aim at wit or learning, which is the ſcope of other writers. You meet with no paſſions; you do not know what ſort of men they were, though every human

(12) Taylor's Schemeof Scrip. Divin. (13) Newcome's Pref. to the Minor Prophets. (14) Jackſon's Works, vol. 1. (15) Abbadie ſur la Verite, &c. vol. 1.

human compoſition on ſuch ſubjects is tinctured with the affections of its author. How can theſe things be accounted for? St. Peter reſolves the doubt, *they all ſpake by the ſame Holy Spirit.*

The ſacred hiſtory abounds with internal marks of authenticity and antiquity. (16) It is methodical and conſiſtent throughout; no profane hiſtory is ſo. In the firſt ages, profane hiſtory is obſcure, and full of fictions; in the ſucceeding, where ſacred ends, it is beginning. The Jews having no prophets after the Babyloniſh captivity, their hiſtory becomes inaccurate, as appears from Joſephus, though other nations at that time began to keep regular annals. (17) Newton has proved that the reigns of kings do not, on a medium, exceed nineteen years. They of Judah and Iſrael fall ſhort of that period; but the kings of Babylon, Egypt, &c. according to their own accounts, reigned the medium of thirty or forty years. The generations of men he has proved, on a medium, to be thirty years; their accounts make them fifty or ſixty years.

Hieroglyphics, which repreſent the ſenſe of the mind by outward figures, were the moſt ancient literature, and they are often alluded to by the author of the Pentateuch, as living at a time when the remembrance of them was ſtrong: thus he has a *rod* for authority, an *horn* for dominion. Again, the different books of the Old Teſtament are juſt ſuch as we ſhould expect to find them, when we are made acquainted with the temporal ſituation of the authors. The Jews ſay, that Iſaiah was a courtier, and ſo he is lofty and high, and his images ſublime: they ſay Amos

(16) Hartley's Obſervat. (17) Prieſtley's Inſtit. vol. 2.

Amos was a ſhepherd, and ſo he is humble and low; his ſentiments eaſy, and his images paſtoral. The like might be ſhewn of the others.

Once more—God refuſing to give himſelf a proper name, manifeſts a wiſdom more than human; for proper names are uſeful only to ſhew the difference of things: but as God is *one*, and as there is none other than him, he needed no ſuch mark to diſtinguiſh him. Even when the Jewiſh economy, and the ſtate of the heathen world, made it neceſſary for him to give himſelf ſome title of diſcrimination, the appellations are of ſuch a kind, as to teach that his nature is unſearchable, and eternal. It is unlikely that a deceiver would ſpeak after this manner. But as a detail of this nature would protract this article beyond its due proportion, let it be ſufficient to add, that ſuch conſiderations as theſe induced (18) Sir Iſaac Newton (who never had the ſcriptures off his table) to tell an intimate, that he found more internal marks of authenticity in the Bible, than in any profane author whatever. Such conſiderations drew a ſimilar avowal from Mr. Locke, in his dying moments. "Study the ſcriptures," ſaid he, addreſſing himſelf to a weeping friend; "they have God for their author, ſalvation for their end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for their matter." I cannot forbear to conſider the ſuffrages of two ſuch men, (one of whom made the material, the other, the intellectual world his own,) as ſomething more than mere arguments *ad verecundiam*. Thoſe great perſons knew, that it would be ridiculous to ſay, (19) that Moſes's books were forged ſince the

(18) See the Britiſh Plutarch. (19) Allix's Reflections.

the ſeptuagint tranſlation, becauſe from that time they were kept as well by Heathens as by Jews; that it would be ridiculous to ſay, that they were forged between that time and the revolt of the ten tribes; for the ten tribes had them, and the two tribes had them, and referred to them, though they hated each other; that it would be equally abſurd to affirm, that they were forged between that revolt and the time of Moſes, and palmed as his productions, becauſe they mention ſeveral rites, as the three feaſts, jubilee, reading them on the ſabbath, &c. which are mentioned as being done ever ſince the time of Moſes. Now would not the Jews know whether theſe things were ſo or not? They muſt have believed that they were taught theſe books when children, and that they grew up to manhood performing the rites which theſe enjoined. Let the reader obſerve on this place, that from hence ariſeth an evidence, which we have not for any other ancient matters of fact, becauſe the things recorded in ſcripture are atteſted by ſtanding monuments, and ſenſible obſervances, commencing from the time in which the actions were done. For inſtance, the law told the Jews that all the firſt born of Egypt were ſlain; (a judgment on a land, which, if not the mother, was the nurſe of idolatry) but of this they had a ſtanding proof in the ceremony of the paſſover, and dedication of the firſt born. The law told them that Aaron's rod budded; that their forefathers were fed with manna; that they had been healed by looking on a brazen ſerpent; and the rod, a pot of manna, and the brazen ſerpent were ſtill exiſting among them. The law told them how the ancient inhabitants were extirpated, and the preſervation

of

of the Gibeonites was a living teſtimony of this to poſterity. Obſerve now the inconſiſtency of unbelievers. They receive the Iliad implicitly, on the authority of the Greeks; though its ſtory was never expreſſed in their public monuments, neither did it contain their laws, and their republics could ſubſiſt without it: yet they wiſh to reject the Pentateuch, having theſe characteriſtics. (20) It cannot be ſaid that any one of the five books could be foiſted in among the reſt, becauſe they were read every ſeventh day, ſo that a child could diſcover the impoſition; becauſe the people who were commanded to read the Pentateuch themſelves, and to teach it to their children, muſt have had copies for this purpoſe; the prieſts muſt have had them, the magiſtrates muſt have had them, as containing the law of the land. This multiplicity of copies rendered ſuch inſertion, as alſo the loſs of the law impoſſible. If ever there was a time, wherein we could ſuppoſe that the Jews might loſe their law, it was during the utter deſtruction of Jeruſalem by Titus; but we know that this was ſo far from being the caſe (21) that even a remnant of that diſperſion, which was found long after in the Indies, were in poſſeſſion of their ſacred books. (22) Never was any volume guarded with ſuch vigilance, as the Moſaic. It was kept in the moſt holy place of both tabernacle and temple, by the ſide of the ark: nay, its very letters were reckoned over by learned men. The Jews, who certainly ever did, and do now believe that it is divine, dared not make any additions or ſubtractions

(20) Allix's Reflect. (21) Vide Proops's Biblia Hebrea præfat. (22) Taylor's Scheme, &c.

tractions therein, becauſe there is a prohibition, in the beginning of Deuteronomy, againſt altering the law. Hence aroſe the diſtinctions of *keri* and *ketib* ſo uſual among this people. When they diſapproved of a word in the text, on finding a fitter one, in ſome other manuſcript, they put it down in the margin with a *keri*, as much as to ſay "read thus;" but they would not by any means change what was once written. Therefore there is no room at all for ſuſpecting interpolations.

When the nature of the credentials produced by Moſes is conſidered, it muſt be granted, that theſe alone ſhould determine our aſſent to the hiſtory which he has written. But we have not been left to depend upon his ſole authority. We are aſſured of the concurring teſtimony of the whole Jewiſh nation at leaſt. (23) It is utterly improbable that they would have received the ſtory of the creation, fall, deluge, call of Abraham, circumciſion, burthenſome and expenſive ceremonies, abſtinence from idolatry, to which all men were then prone, going up ſo often to Jeruſalem, &c. &c. if they knew that what he told them was a fiction. From the uſe which he makes of the promiſes of *Meſſiah*, and the inheritance of Canaan, it is evident, he ſuppoſed them generally known; otherwiſe, ſuch a man as he would not be ſo ſtupid as to make two things of which they had not heard before, the foundation of ſo many laws. He recites other things ſo briefly, as to ſhew that the Iſraelites were no ſtrangers to the things which he was relating. Thus, he ſays the ſiſter of Tubal Cain was Naamah,

(23) Allix's Reflections, &c.

Naamah, as much as to ſay, this woman of whom ye all have heard: again ſpeaking of Anah, he ſays, this is that Anah who found the mules, or hot-ſprings in the wilderneſs. Such of my readers as are acquainted with the Hebrew original muſt have obſerved, that he ſuppoſes the notoriety of the facts in various inſtances. He has *Hanahaſh, that* ſerpent, *Hamabul, that* flood; whereas, he would have omitted the *he emphaticum*, had theſe things been unknown to them before.

The teſtimony of Pagan writers, is alſo as explicit and full as could be deſired, for ſuch facts as might reaſonably be expected to fall under their cognizance. (24) Sanchoniatho mentions, that there was only one human pair at firſt. The hiſtory of the ſerpent is ſtill among the Siameſe. All nations have a golden, a ſilver, and a brazen age. As war and rapine prevail univerſally during the infancy of uncivilized ſtates, the knowledge of this better ſtate of things muſt have been derived from tradition. Homer has *Ate*; Heſiod *Pandora*; they have the ſeventh day ſacred; darkneſs before light; apparitions of the Divinity to try men. (25) Now if poetry and hiſtory were to begin anew, men would, laſt of all things, think of bringing God on the theatre; and if they did, it would be looked upon as a ſorry joke, contradicting all experience. This would anciently have been the caſe, if there were no ſuch appearances. (26) But it was uſeful for man, that God ſhould manifeſt himſelf in the beginning, as there was no writing or ſure

(24) An Un. Hiſt. vol. 1. (25) Jackſon's Works, vol. 1.
(26) Pyle's Pref. to the Old Teſ. 1.

ſure way of preſerving a revelation, and this alone explains what would be otherwiſe inconſiſtent with reaſon and poetic decorum. Men err exceedingly in attributing all wonderful relations to the credulity of their anceſtors; for as there was never any effect without a cauſe, therefore, if they were inclined to believe wonders, it was becauſe they had once ſeen wonders. Their teſtimony might make their poſterity credulous. The long lives of men, ſo neceſſary for peopling the earth, learning and teaching arts, is atteſted by many, whoſe names are recorded by Joſephus. The memory of the deluge is as univerſal as its effects: even the dove ſent from the ark, is mentioned by Abydenus. (27) Lucian gives a hiſtory of the flood, and of its cauſe, almoſt in the very ſame manner as Moſes. Born in Aſia, he had better information than the Greeks, who knew little of tradition. Indeed, the traces of it are ſtill every where viſible. (28) The horns of Indian deer are found in England, under ſtratums of ſea-ſhell, which overturns that unfounded hypotheſis, which would account for the phenomena, by the gradual ſeceſſion of the ſea from the land. Elephants teeth are dug up in Siberia, to which place Mr. Coxe ſuppoſes they were driven by the waters. Herodotus and Strabo ſay, that there was an old tower at Babylon, the loweſt height of which was a furlong, therefore, it was higher than any of the Egyptian pyramids. They relate the fact, but make no attempt to account for it. Babel was built on theſe plains. The

(27) De Diis Syriis. (28) Hill's Remarks on the Phil. Tranſ.

burning of Sodom is mentioned by Diodorus and Tacitus. The name of Abraham remains famous in the eaſt to this day. Voltaire ſays, that the learned Hyde, by reſearches made on the ſpot, found that the books of the Perſians contradict what we learn of Abraham in the ſcripture. Hyde ſays juſt the contrary, and affirms that the Magians, Sabians, Perſians and Indians, look on him as the reformer of their religions. (29) Beroſus mentions him honourably; Hecateus wrote a book about him; Nicolaus Damaſcenes gives almoſt the ſame account of him as the Bible; the Lacedemonians claimed their deſcent from him, in the time of the Maccabees. It is well known, ſays Origen, that they who invoke demons among the Pagans, uſe theſe words, *the God of Abraham.* The Arabians boaſt of him as their anceſtor, and circumciſe their children at the age of thirteen, as he did Iſhmael their progenitor. It is moſt probable that the Egyptians derived this painful rite from the Arabians, their conquerors, as Tacitus allows, that the Jews firſt inſtituted circumciſion, to be diſtinguiſhed by a particular mark. Manetho, Cheremon, Apollonius and Lyſimachus, are quoted by Euſebius, as ſaying, that the Jews left Egypt under Moſes, the founder of their laws. Eupolemus and Artabanus, are quoted for the ſame purpoſe by Joſephus. Strabo declares that Moſes was an Egyptian prieſt, who withdrew from thence with many others, refuſing to join in the worſhip of animals. Their egreſs is ſpoken of by Juſtin, by Tacitus. The former of theſe ſays, that when the Egyptians purſued

(29) Euſeb. Præp. Evan. lib. 9.

purſued them, they were obliged by ſtorms to return home. This was the beſt face which the heathens could put upon the affair. Numenius allows that Moſes brought calamities on Egypt, which the magicians could not remove. (30) Pliny ſpeaks of Moſes, Jannes and Jambres, as great wonder-workers: ſo does Apuleius. Chalcidius talks of him as one of eminent wiſdom. (31) Diodorus claſſes him with the ſix moſt ancient legiſlators, and ſays, that he got his laws from the god Tao. Hermippus in Joſephus ſays, that the philoſophers borrowed much from the Jews. Jamblichus, in his Life of Pythagoras, writes, that Pythagoras met the followers of Moſchus in Sidon. Learned men have ſhewn, that by Moſchus he meant Moſes, for Pythagoras agreed with him in many particulars, of which the tetragrammaton, ſo celebrated in the Italic ſchool, is a famous inſtance. Plato borrowed ſo much from him, that Numenius ſaid he was *Moſes, ſpeaking Greek.* What Plutarch has related of Typhon, ought moſt probably to be aſcribed to Moſes. He was carried on an aſs ſeven days; he was the ſon of Iſaac; he begat two ſons, Hieroſolumus and Judeus. The wars of Typhon with the gods of Egypt are univerſally known, and well might Moſes, who wrought ſuch wonders againſt that land, be called after his name. Moſes is mentioned in the Orphic verſes (32), which are at leaſt as old as the time of Piſiſtratus. Juvenal ſpeaks of him as the author of a volume: he is quoted by Longinus: but it is ſo tedious to recite all the teſti-

 monies

(30) Lib. 30. (31) Lib. 2. (32) Marſham's Canon Chron.

monies relating to him, that I refer the reader to the ninth book of Euſeb. Præp. Evan. and to the books of Joſephus againſt Appion. He will find alſo in theſe, that the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, was atteſted by Artabanus and Beroſus. The Ichthiophagi, a people on its borders, had an old tradition, in the days of Diodorus, that its bottom had once been ſeen dry. Shaw and Pocock, learned travellers to the eaſt, ſaw the channels worn by the water, in the granite rock of Rephadim at Horeb, from whence it flowed for ſupplying the congregation of Iſrael. (33) They have accounts in the Chineſe annals, of the ſun's remaining above the horizon for a long time, at a period which juſt ſynchronizes with Joſhua. (34) The actions of David and Solomon were related in the Phenician annals; the actions of Elijah, by Menander, and confeſſed by Julian. Eupolemus tells how David ſent ſhips to Ophir. Herodotus ſpeaks of Pharaoh-Necho deſtroying Jeruſalem, which he calls *Cadytis*, the Greek termination from *Keduſhah* holy. (35) The Aſſyrian books teſtify that they had long wars with the Jews. (36) Xerxes returning from his Greek expedition, deſtroyed the temple of Belus, and took out of it a ſtatue, anſwering to the deſcription of that given by Daniel. (37) A great deal of the Old Teſtament is found in the Zend. The author ſpeaks of Abraham, Moſes, Joſeph, Solomon, as the ſcripture does; ſo that here is an independent confirmation of the Jewiſh hiſtory.

The

(33) Shuckford's Con. vol. 3. (34) Clarke's Evid. (35) Orig. con. Cel. (36) Prideaux's Con. (37) Ibid.

The Book of Job is ſuppoſed by Shultens, Sherlock, &c. to have been written by Job himſelf, before any of the books of Moſes were extant; therefore its teſtimony to religious doctrine, is alſo diſtinct from the authority of Moſes. The Arabians are another diſtinct teſtimony from Moſes for Abraham, Iſhmael, circumciſion, the creation and the deluge, in which articles, ſays Gibbon (38), they held a *ſingular* agreement with the Jews. (39) There are only four Greek hiſtorians, who wrote before the time of Julius Cæſar, come down to us: two of theſe, Polybius and Herodotus, mention the Jews, the former with honour, as appears from Joſephus; the two others, Xenophon and Thucydides, could not be expected to ſay any thing of them, as writing on particular ſubjects. Now, when it is conſidered, that there were no hiſtorians for a long time after Moſes, and that the oriental records, which alone could preſerve the memory of ſuch facts, have utterly periſhed, it is juſt matter of aſtoniſhment, that ſo much has been handed down. Herodotus acknowledges that the Greeks knew little of the Egyptians, till the time of Pſammeticus, i. e. eight hundred years after the Exodus. Is it probable, that after ſo long an interval, the Egyptians would tell the Greeks of their own diſgraces? Letters were unknown in Europe before the reign of David, and therefore how irrational is it to expect that events which preceded the exiſtence of any weſtern hiſtorian, ſhould be recorded? But deiſts, either from ignorance or ſome other cauſe, reaſon on this head,

(38) Decline and Fall, &c. vol. 9. (39) Jenkin's Reaſon. &c. vol. 1.

head, juſt as if the world had been then, what it is at preſent; now that printing and commerce facilitate our communication with every quarter of the globe. Even the cotemporary Greek hiſtorians take little notice of the wars of the Romans and Carthaginians. All Europe was for a long time ignorant of Gengis-khan and his conqueſts, though he ſpread them farther than any other conqueror. Certainly, communications between diſtant people were better opened then, than in the days of Moſes; wherefore, if I argued about theſe points as a deiſt argues about the Jewiſh hiſtory, I might reject them with much better reaſon: for, I might obſerve how improbable it is, that the Greek writers would remain ſilent ſpectators, whilſt two potent, bordering empires were rending each other with reiterated wars. I might obſerve, moreover, that as we have no Carthaginian books, the credit of the whole reſts with the haughty Romans; and that, therefore, we ſhould place no reliance on a tale, which ſeems to have been calculated merely to augment their own glory. Indeed, as to the facts done among the Jews themſelves, theſe could only be witneſſed by themſelves, from the nature of things; and if any other nation had borne teſtimony to them, they muſt have received their accounts from the people of Iſrael. As to the univerſal facts, we have ſhewn already that nations which had not books to confirm them, do it by their traditions. Upon the whole, it is the greateſt poſſible diſingenuity to refuſe crédit to the hiſtory of a nation, becauſe kingdoms which never had annals, or which have ſince loſt them, do not corroborate its narrations. It is preciſely the ſame thing, as if a

Chineſe

Chineſe, in a few centuries hence, would deny the maſſacre of St. Bartholemew, or the gunpowder plot, becauſe he did not find in his own, or in the neighbouring nations, any records teſtifying them to poſterity. Nay, he would be more juſtifiable in withholding his aſſent, becauſe theſe things, conſidered as the works of men, are much more improbable than the miracles of the Old Teſtament, conſidered as the works of God, wrought for the moſt valuable and important ends.

But even allowing that there were hiſtorians cotemporary with Moſes, well aſſured of the wonders wrought by him, and of the excellence of his laws; yet is there not a weighty and convincing reaſon why they ſhould paſs them by in ſilence? (40) Polytheiſm was univerſally eſtabliſhed. Moſes forbade image-worſhip; he pronounced the idols of the nations to be vanities; he allowed no adoration of inferior deities; he had no battles or amours of gods, to ſupport a ſyſtem of idolatry, or to ſuit the taſte of a people delighting in fables. Now, if any man had mentioned ſuch a conſtitution with approbation, would not that convey a ſevere ſatire on the religion and polity of his own country? A writer acting in this manner, might have met the fate of Socrates or Anaxagoras.

So then, upon a review of the whole evidence, it may be aſſerted, that if ever any ancient fact was better atteſted than another; if there be any certainty, any aſſurance of any paſt tranſactions, there is an aſſurance that Moſes was the author of the Pentateuch, and Law-giver of the Jews. I have

(40) Leland's View, vol. 2.

have ſhewn, by a deduction of particulars, that this volume was among that people from the time of Moſes, juſt as a Roman would ſhew, that the twelve tables were among his countrymen from the times of the decemviri, or as an Engliſhman would ſhew, that doomſday-book exiſted ſince the age of William the Conqueror. The reaſon why I have been ſo particular in ſhewing this, is, becauſe that the facts upon which his law is founded are of ſuch a kind as could not be impoſed on any people. The reader ſhould particularly obſerve, that the laws preſuppoſe the facts which are the ground-work of his whole ſyſtem, a ſyſtem, which would be truly unaccountable, if theſe had never happened. But he appeals to the congregation thus, in the book of Deuteronomy: "Your eyes have "ſeen all the great acts of the Lord which he "did. The Lord made not this covenant with "our fathers, but with us, who are all of us "here alive at this day. Aſk now of the days "that are paſt, which were before, ſince the day "that God created man upon the earth, and "aſk from one ſide of heaven unto the other, "whether there be any ſuch thing as this great "thing is, or hath been heard like it?" Wherefore, upon the deiſtical hypotheſis, Moſes muſt have perſuaded ſix hundred thouſand men in arms, beſides women and children, that they paſſed through the midſt of the ſea; that they ſaw Mount Sinai wrapped in thunder; that they heard the voice of a divine perſon delivering the decalogue, &c. &c. while all this time, no ſuch things happened.

What are we to conclude from all this? Why, that unbelievers have been much miſrepreſented.

They

They have been conſidered as men wonderfully incredulous; whereas, this is an inſtance of blind credulity, unexampled in any country, or in any age. Certainly it may be ſaid, *they ſtrain at a gnat, and ſwallow a camel.* For up from the dawnings of reaſon in a child, to the towering and aſcendant genius of Bacon, the miraculous interference of the Deity, ſhewing forth his power, his holineſs, his mercy, reſcuing men from error and idolatry, and adding vigour and efficacy to his laws, appears perfectly conſiſtent; nay it is what, from his attributes we might humbly expect; and it is therefore perfectly agreeable to right reaſon, to acquieſce in the belief of ſuch interference, when teſtified to us by eye-witneſſes. So that we Chriſtians, are guided in this matter by the dictates of common ſenſe, whilſt the patrons of infidelity muſt give credit to what no ſilly old woman could digeſt. I ſhould wiſh to perſuade myſelf, that many gentlemen, poſſeſſed with the ſpirit of unbelief, have not been thoroughly aware of theſe abſurd conſequences. Contented with giving a confuſed general diſſent, they have ſat down to ſatisfy their different ruling paſſions without control, and without remorſe.

SECT. V.

WE have ſhewn, that an irrefragable argument for the divine inſpiration of the Pentateuch, is derived from its being the word of Moſes. I ſhall now proceed to ſtate another, which ariſes from the life and conduct of that man of God. In the compaſs of ancient hiſtory, there

there is not perhaps a finer ſubject for declamatory eulogium; but this ſerious and momentous inquiry ſhould be the buſineſs of the underſtanding alone, which peremptorily rejects any parade or glitter of expreſſion. It muſt be obvious to a reader of the books of Moſes, that the aggrandiſement of the author is not conſulted. He neither magnifies himſelf by high birth, or heroic atchievements; he is a little child, expoſed to periſh; he is reſcued by Pharaoh's daughter, and becomes her ſon; he ſees and pities his brethren, groaning under their oppreſſion, and in a paroxyſm of indignation, ſlays an Egyptian, who was ſmiting an Iſraelite. Obliged to fly to Midian, he becomes the keeper of Jethro's flock; he reluctantly obeys the divine ſummons; he reluctantly circumciſes his child; he has ſuch an impediment in his ſpeech, as to require his brother to ſpeak for him before Pharaoh. When Iſrael fought againſt Amalek, he is not repreſented terrible in the front of battle, ruſhing as a lion upon the foe, a picture, which would have been highly agreeable to the genius of that age: he is ſtanding upon a neighbouring hill, with hands uplifted towards heaven. There is no account of his wars in Ethiopia; of his marriage with the king's daughter, and of ſuch ſtories as the Rabbis have invented. At Horeb, he ſpake unadviſedly with his lips; and for not ſanctifying God before the congregation, he was excluded from the promiſed land, after ſojourning forty years in a waſte and howling wilderneſs. This frank and ingenuous confeſſion, is not the language of a man, paſſing himſelf for one of the great ones of the earth.

He

He treats of his own nation and family, with the ſame rigorous impartiality. He extenuates no faults, he ſignalizes neither as eminent for wiſdom and proweſs. But rather reproaches them for that daſtardly ſpirit, which a long and cruel bondage had partly inſpired. He calls them a ſtiff-necked and rebellious people, and reminds them how often they had provoked the Lord. He makes the deſcendants of Cain to be the inventors of arts; he does not arrogate them for Seth's line, of which his countrymen were deſcended. He was no favourer of polygamy; he relates that God created only one pair at firſt, and when Lamech took two wives, he mentions it as a thing extraordinary. Now where is the likelihood that an impoſtor would mortify a people thus, by telling them of their own and their anceſtors crimes, or that they would bear it at his hand? Would he ſpeak of the drunkenneſs of Noah, the inceſt of Tamar, the cruelties exerciſed by the Shechemites, the perfidy of Joſeph's brethren, Reuben's inceſt, Reuben and Simeon being deprived of the rights of primogeniture, their own revolts, their blaſphemies, their abandoning themſelves to whoredom with the daughters of Moab, their worſhipping the golden calf? A deiſt muſt believe that he had more cogent reaſons than Joſephus had for ſtriking out this laſt circumſtance. He relates moreover how Jacob ſupplanted Eſau, which on principles of policy he would have concealed from the Edomites; and while other nations affected to derive their pedigree from Gods, a Jew was obliged to acknowledge annually before the Lord, "a Syrian ready to periſh was my father," &c. He recounts the barbarity of his own anceſtor, the inſurrection of his brother and ſiſter, and what

what has been often deſervedly inſiſted on, that the civil and eccleſiaſtical authorities were conferred out of his own family, and his children became Levites. It cannot be ſaid, therefore, that any of the known motives for impoſture influenced his conduct.

It remains only to ſhew, that from the manner in which he diſpenſed his laws, he could not be a deceiver. It was, in general, directly oppoſite to the practice of all other ancient legiſlators. He uſed none of the arts which the oriental ſages thought ſo neceſſary. He did not, like them, found his theology on popular opinions; his fundamental principle was ſubverſive of polytheiſm and idolatrous devotion. (2) His doctrines were not contained in ſacerdotal characters, and hieroglyphics, which however they adopted under the guiſe of concealing them from the profane vulgar, but in fact to give nonſenſe the air of myſtery. He ſpeaks with the hardihood of one aſſured of divine aſſiſtance, and conſcious of the truth of his aſſertions. When the Jews, terrified at the report of the ſpies, were proceeding to ſtone him, and to return into Egypt, he denounces, without ſoothing or compliance, that not one of them ſhould reach the promiſed land, and that their carcaſes ſhould fall in the wilderneſs. In this perilous juncture, an impoſtor would have recourſe to other arts, and, above all things, would not have riſqued a prediction which they might ſo eaſily confute.

Had he compoſed a fabulous narration, he would naturally have thrown back the age of the world to a period widely remote from the era

(2) Leland's View, vol. 2.

era in which he lived. This would be the only effectual way of obſcuring fictions; whereas he makes four or five men competent to convey the hiſtory down from the creation to his own time. He took bad ground whereon to build an impoſture. In Herodotus, who lived a thouſand years after him, when writing was common, a reader will find evident falſehoods, and hearſay rumours; yet this perſon travelled a great deal, and was a ſincere lover of truth: but Moſes ſpeaks with authority, not as a collector of reports. An unbeliever is defied to produce a fact vouched for by him which modern experience contradicts. From the matter of the Talmud, which was not written in a fabulous age, and yet than which no book of chivalry can be more abſurd, we may gueſs what ſort of production, a Jew, if left to himſelf, would exhibit in theſe early days. No man would look for that dignified ſimplicity and ardent piety, that chaſtneſs and correctneſs of manner, which introduces no ſuperior being without a difficulty worthy his interpoſition.

Neither can it be imagined, that a deceiver would introduce laws, which, from their nature, muſt fall into immediate diſrepute; and bring down upon him the curſes of a famiſhed people. Yet of this kind was the law for letting their grounds lie fallow every ſeventh year, and that other for the males going up to Shiloh three times annually, or, as (4) Mr. Davis will have it, at one of the three ſeaſons of the year. The appointment of annual and weekly ceſſations from

(3) Clayton's Vindic. vol. 3. (4) Davis's Exam. of Gibbon.

from labour, was alſo apparently againſt the intereſts of a people who ſubſiſted by agriculture. In promiſing ſupernatural plenty on the ſixth year, with peace and proſperity if they obeyed, and in denouncing war and calamity, if rebellious, Moſes put the truth of his commiſſion and predictions to an immediate teſt; juſt as Jeſus Chriſt did, when he foretold that Jeruſalem ſhould be deſolate before that generation would paſs. The author of the Pentateuch, perſuaded of open providential interpoſition, makes that alone the ſanction of his law; and though he evidently ſuppoſes a future ſtate, juſt as our own civil laws do, yet he makes no uſe of its puniſhments to command reſpect. I beg that the reader may take notice of this, that the Moſaic law was abſolutely without any ſanction, but that of providential interpoſition, and that to this alone it ſtands indebted, for not being aboliſhed juſt after its promulgation. For why are particular conſtitutions ſubmitted to at this day? Is it not becauſe that they who have the ſupreme power find it their intereſt and pleaſure to comply with them? But if the ruling powers found another form more agreeable to their views, will any man ſay that they would not adopt it? I know it has been the uniform practice in all ages, with ſuch as had authority, to model a government to their own taſte. Now, if ever any ſyſtem of civil policy was unacceptable to any people, it was that of Moſes to the kings and nation of the Jews. Their frequent deſertions from it, are unequivocal proofs of this aſſertion. Therefore, would not they alſo, following the example of ſurrounding kingdoms, accommodate it to idolatry and ſuch favourite propenſities? They would have

acted

acted in this case like other men. But was their conduct such? No, as often as they fell off from it, so often did they return to its obedience, which can be only accounted for by their reiterated defeats, when in rebellion. Besides, some of the tribes had pretexts for the most acrimonious resentments. Reuben lost the right of sacrificing and the sceptre; and Simeon had hardly any inheritance. This would rankle in their hearts. Wherefore their adhering to that law at all, and their preserving the books of Moses till this day, are proofs of providential interposition. Another unanswerable argument on this head, is drawn from the open appeals made by this law-giver to the people, in behalf of his divine commission. It must be observed, that he does not speak to them, of things done in caves and forests, but of things done before their eyes; he particularizes, he circumstantiates every fact; he builds his whole law and republic upon what they themselves had seen. There subsists then a total difference between Moses's pretensions to heavenly intercourse, and those of other legislators pretending to the same. For where did Numa pretend to get his law? In darkness and solitude, from the goddess Egeria. Where did Zamolxis? In Dacian glooms. Where did Mahomet? In a night journey to heaven. Where did Moses? Even in the presence of the people. (5) The reason assigned by the Egyptians for worshipping the hawk, was, because one of them, according to their priests, brought down their sacred book from heaven. Now, I cannot conceive, why if all claims to revelation be forge-

ries,

(5) Diod. Sic. lib. 1.

ries, the perſons above mentioned would not take the ſame method as Moſes, and pretend that they alſo received them before the whole nation. This would have added material weight to their allegations, and no man will ſay, that it was want of addreſs which occaſioned ſuch an omiſſion in ſuch men. But the cauſe of it can be eaſily aſſigned. They knew it to be impracticable, and that a falſehood ſo glaring would overſet the beſt concerted ſchemes. It requires, therefore, only a grain of candour to allow how perfectly diſſimilar the caſe of Moſes is, from thoſe of other legiſlators; and that while Deiſts, to diſparage the man of God, talk of different perſons claiming equally a communication with heaven, they are proceeding upon grounds as diſingenuous as falſe.

An argument like unto the former ariſes from the conduct of the Jewiſh people. The whole tenor of their actions bears uniform atteſtation to their reliance on ſupernatural direction. Their ſojourning ſo long in the deſert; their forbearing to attack the Moabites, Edomites and Ammonites, who lay contiguous; but inſtead thereof, fetching a great compaſs to get at ſeven nations, whoſe cities were walled up to heaven, and among whom were the children of Anak, are altogether inexplicable, on the ſuppoſition of no divine command. Again, on entering the promiſed land, the whole hoſt were circumciſed at Gilgal, thereby diſqualifying themſelves from aſſaulting or repelling a formidable and exaſperated foe. Now, would any people, if left to themſelves, act in this manner? or after having poſſeſſed themſelves of their enemies horſes and chariots, would they deſtroy the former, and burn

burn the latter with fire; as alſo the gold, the ſilver, and the precious things, of thoſe accurſed and impious nations? In general, all the common hiſtorical events recorded in the Old Teſtament, grow in a manner miraculous, if you ſuppoſe the agents to be guided by the ſame reaſonings and ideas as other men. When the government became monarchical, their kings neither enacted new laws, nor changed the conſtitution; it remained ever unvaried, an example unparalleled, as Joſephus has obſerved. They were deſired to elect their firſt monarch, not from the princes or elders, but from a family which was the leaſt of all the tribes at that period. No other nations have formed their hiſtory ſo much to their diſadvantage, or charged themſelves with ſuch reiterated revolts from their religion: indeed, other nations had no inducements to abandon religions which had been modified, ſo as to be grateful to fleſh and blood. The Jews declare, how frequently and how diſhonourably they bowed to a foreign yoke; how their emancipations were owing, not to valour, but to tears and ſupplications. Biſhop Patrick takes notice, that we meet with no expreſſions in other books, ſuch as "The Lord delivered them into "our hands," &c. when they ſpeak of conquering an enemy. The greateſt panegyric which they have heaped upon their heroes, is, that they walked in the way of the Lord, and deſtroyed idols.

When all theſe conſiderations are put together; when it ſhall be made to appear that miracles were wrought, prophecies uttered and fulfilled, in confirmation of the Jewiſh doctrines; and that the accumulated evidences of the Chriſ-

tian religion go equally to eſtabliſh the Moſaic law; I ſay, that this collective body of teſtimony forms an irreſiſtible torrent of conviction, able to bear down the moſt determined infidelity, whenſoever it ſhall ſuffer itſelf to weigh theſe arguments.

SECT. VI.

IT may be of conſiderable import to ſhew, from the accounts given in the Jewiſh ſcriptures, that men had from the beginning ſufficient means of learning their duty. I ſhall alſo ſtate the uſes of the Iſraelitiſh diſpenſation. I deem this neceſſary, as nothing has been regarded leſs, by the generality of Chriſtians, or ſuffered more from the perverſions of deiſtical writers.

We learn from the book of Geneſis, that primeval religion conſiſted but of few articles; that there was one God; that he was a Spirit; that he was the Creator of the world; that he was to be worſhipped: theſe, with ſome intimations of a Meſſiah, conſtituted its eſſential parts. Theſe ſimple, and apparently obvious truths, might be carried down from Adam to Abraham, by two perſons, Methuſelah and Shem; while three others, Jacob, Levi, and Amram, could tranſmit them from Abraham to Moſes. (1) Beſides, in theſe early times they had frequent manifeſtations of the divine preſence, as alſo a ſpirit of prophecy; for Noah was the eighth preacher of righteouſneſs, and Enoch left a prophetic name to his ſon; for Methuſelah

(1) Law's Theory of Religion.

Methuſelah ſignifies, *he dies, ſending an inundation.* After the flood, God made a covenant with mankind; he ſoon after diſperſed them at Babel, by which he ſhewed his power; and they had Noah for a long time living among them. Egypt, Chaldea, and Canaan, which were, perhaps, the only parts of the world then peopled, had many examples of holineſs and true worſhip before their eyes. They had Abraham, Melchiſedech, Lot, Iſrael, Job, &c. They had the burning of Sodom, and the wonders in Egypt; therefore, *they were without excuſe.* God cauſed the patriarchs to wander through theſe regions, as burning and ſhining lights.

It muſt be allowed, that all theſe means were adequate to produce the effects intended by them, juſt as the works of the creation were for ſhewing the exiſtence of a God. It does not follow, that either were naturally inefficacious, becauſe not always attended by the deſigned effects; for moral cauſes do not produce their effects neceſſarily; theſe depend on the temper and ingenuouſneſs of the perſons on whom the cauſes operate. If things were ordered otherwiſe, it it is clear there could be no teſt of merit at all, and that you might as conſiſtently reward a puppet as a man.

Agreeable to the principle upon which God raiſed up the patriarchs, he exhibited the nation of the Jews, when the Gentiles, in compliance with corrupt imaginations, had extinguiſhed the light of reaſon and tradition. As at times, he choſe a man in that nation, to teach them his ſtatutes; in like manner, he choſe it among other nations, and placed it as a city on a hill, to hold up the candle of revelation to a be-

nighted world. Their whole conſtitution was calculated to preſerve the great fundamentals of religion inviolate, and to beget a curioſity in the neighbouring people of inquiring into it, by a train of the moſt brilliant ſucceſs, never failing to crown their obedience, while their apoſtacies were ever followed by a ſeries of calamitous diſaſters. The better to promote theſe ends, they were placed in the centre of the then known world. They had Egypt and Arabia on the ſouth; Aſſyria, Syria and Chaldea, on the eaſt; and on the weſt, lay Tyre and Sidon, the emporiums of the univerſe. So then all theſe mighty empires, which, in proceſs of time, diſſeminated knowledge through Europe, had always either on their borders, or among themſelves, a polity and religion wonderfully fittted to awaken attention. If they neglected to avail themſelves of this, it concludes no more againſt the inſtitution itſelf, than it does againſt the wonders of the heavens and the great deep; becauſe they are often gazed upon with a dull incurious eye.

It appears now, that God intended that the Jewiſh religion ſhould affect the reſt of the world. He ſays he would be glorified by *their means*, in the ſight of the Heathen. This intention was in a great meaſure anſwered. The Jewiſh prophets were reſpected over the Eaſt. Nineveh repented, on the preaching of Jonah. Naaman and Hazael came up from Syria to conſult Eliſha. At other times they ſuffered death, for reproving the idolatries of theſe ſeveral countries. The Egyptians ſlew Jeremiah, and the Babylonians Ezekiel. The Ethiopians made their acknowledgments to the true God, for delivering

livering them from Sennacherib. The monarchs of Aſſyria and Perſia publiſhed decrees in his favour, through their extenſive dominions. This latter empire was ſubverted by Alexander. He conſulted the prophecies of Daniel about himſelf, and offered ſacrifices at Jeruſalem. The teſtimony of Joſephus for this fact, is confirmed mightily by the conduct of the Conqueror. He ſhewed great kindneſs to the Jews, and remitted their tribute every ſeventh year; though he had been ſo exaſperated by their refuſal of proviſions for the ſiege of Tyre, as to reſolve on their utter deſtruction. It is remarkable, that he did not grant the ſame favour to the Samaritans, though they ſubmitted with cheerfulneſs, and even ſent him eight thouſand men. The Jews were either in high favour, or elſe notoriouſly perſecuted by his ſucceſſors, ſo as to be always remarkable. They had their ſynagogues now in all great cities, and the writings of their lawgiver and prophets tranſlated into Greek. At this time, ſays Gibbon, *they excited the wonder and curioſity of other nations*; yet a reader of the leaſt information knows, that, at that period, they conſiſted of little more than two tribes; without king, or ancient glory. When he ſays they emerged from obſcurity, under the ſucceſſors of Alexander, he might with as much reaſon ſay, that the Chineſe emerged from their obſcurity three or four centuries ago; becauſe they were then, for the firſt time, made known to the weſtern world. Under the Roman empire, it is acknowledged, that there was no nation under the Heavens, wherein they had not made proſelytes; and had they acted up to the genius of their religion, they would have made more.

Yet

Yet Judaiſm has, in fact, prepared men for receiving the Chriſtian, Mahometan, and Magian profeſſions. It is conjectured with probability, that Zoroaſter, the founder of the religion of the Eaſt, was the ſervant of Daniel. Pythagoras learned here; Greece from him; the Romans from the Greeks; ſo that all nations were aſſiſted by the Jewiſh revelation. Theſe poſitions will not be controverted, except by ſuch as are unacquainted with ancient hiſtory.

To a conſiderate reader of the Old Teſtament, Judaiſm appears as a reſervoir, wherein the divine revelation was kept, to be diſpenſed, when the world was fit to receive it; as an aſylum, open for all men to flee to, from the contagion of idolatry, and its plagues. Conformable to this principle, the Jewiſh ſtate was, perhaps, the eaſieſt in the ancient world, for ſtrangers to gain admittance into; for other nations made ſevere laws againſt them. The precepts preſcribing gentleneſs to foreigners and ſojourners, are repeated twenty-one times in the law. Hear the prophet Iſaiah on that head. (2) "Alſo the ſons of the ſtranger, that join themſelves unto the Lord, to ſerve him, and to love the name of the Lord; every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant, even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my houſe of prayer." Solomon, alſo, at the dedication of the temple, prays, "That all people might fear God as Iſrael did."

Muſt not every man be convinced now, that any perſon's ſubmitting to the ſame conditions as the

(2) Iſaiah, 56 chap.

the Jews, were entitled to the ſame privileges with them; and that they were raiſed up, only to reveal God to the reſt of the world. What then becomes of all theſe idle aſſertions, about the arbitrary ſelection of one people? &c.

But the uſes of the Jewiſh diſpenſation were not confined to ancient times; they have reached even to our own, and will deſcend down to the conſummation of all things. For, we and our poſterity muſt know, that this polity was erected many centuries before the advent of Chriſt. Notwithſtanding this, we muſt own, that his character, ſufferings, and death, are adumbrated in almoſt all its rites and ceremonies, and in the lives of the worthies who were under it. This ſhall be ſhewn more at large hereafter, as alſo, how a ſucceſſion of prophecies, uttered from Moſes to Malachi, teſtify the ſame things of the Meſſiah. So that God deſigned it as the forerunner of Chriſtianity, to which it bears an illuſtrious atteſtation. He alſo contrived it in ſuch a manner, that its continuance did not depend upon the will of man: it was only neceſſary, to eject the Jews from Paleſtine, and the conſiſtence of their local religion was diſſolved. Theſe are ends worthy of the Deity; and from their fitneſs, may be derived another argument for the divinity of the Jewiſh ſcriptures.

SECT. VII.

THE motives of credibility, eſtabliſhing theſe ſcriptures, are ſo ſtrong, that no prudent man will riſk his ſalvation by rejecting them. It will confirm him in this reſolution, to find that no

no manly or decided proofs have ever been exhibited againſt their contents. Voltaire was forced to recur to palpable falſehoods, through a deſire of expoſing them; while others have ſatisfied themſelves with a few nibbling cavils. Thus, they have carped at the tree of knowledge, and the ſerpent which beguiled Eve. But, muſt not Theiſts, by their own principles allow, that man was not made, like the Leviathan, to take his paſtime in the deep; but for much nobler ends: and that the only rational purpoſe to be aſſigned for his formation is, that by a courſe of trial, he ſhould qualify himſelf for a better ſtate? Upon any other hypotheſis, it ſeems impoſſible to explain the phænomena which occur in the moral world. Now, agreeable to this reaſoning, it was neceſſary that the firſt man ſhould have ſome precept or object before him, to prove his obedience. But God could have given no commandment, but one of the nature of that deſcribed in Geneſis, conſidering the ſtate of Adam and Eve. Not one of the Ten Commandments would have been any trial at all. Any other poſitive injunction, might have the ſame exceptions made to it, or perhaps greater; (1) for this one taught them their duty to themſelves, i. e. to ſubmit their animal appetites to reaſon, as alſo their duty to God; by teaching them, that they receive all things from his bounty; and its eaſineſs declares his goodneſs, who made immortality to depend on ſo trifling a compliance.

In like manner, the ſame objection might be made, if the devil acted upon the organs of any other

(1) Ben. Moxd. vol. 2.

other creature, rather than on the ſerpent; for he could not aſſume the figure of a man, as Eve knew, that ſhe and her huſband were the only human pair. I am aware, that many learned men take this tranſaction in an allegorical ſenſe, and certainly, allegories were much uſed by the eaſterns.

The only remaining objection is, why God ſhould permit the fall of man. Now, we can deduce this truth from his attributes, that he has ever choſen the beſt poſſible plan in his works of creation and providence, though ſome evil muſt neceſſarily attend every created ſyſtem by concomitance; and it is eaſy to ſee, how the preſent ſcheme of things will redound more to our glory in the upſhot, and to his Son's, who is our King, than if there had been no fall whatever. It will be like the gaining a great victory, at the expence of a trifling defeat at firſt; for this fall gave occaſion to the advent of Chriſt, and therefore the old Roman ritual ſung *Felix Adami peccatum*, &c. From the order of nature, we muſt neceſſarily ſuffer ſome temporary inconveniencies, from the lapſe of our common progenitor. Thus, the deſcendant of a noble traitor loſes his title; the ſon of a bankrupt ſuffers for his father's extravagance; an unborn child ſuffers the fate of an unhappy mother, who poiſons herſelf; a diſeaſed parent begets a diſeaſed infant; a poiſonous root muſt bear a malignant plant.

The variety of colours obſervable in the human race, has alſo given occaſion for cavil. (2) But why ſhould it be thought wonderful, that

(2) Nicole's Confer.

that the intenſe heats of Africa could, in proceſs of time, make the inhabitants black, and criſp their hair, when the heats of Aſia curl it, and make them tawny. It would be ſingular, indeed, if a people, ever beſmeared with greaſe and paint, expoſed naked for ſome thouſands of years to a burning ſun, ſhould ſtill continue to reſemble, in theſe arid regions, the natives of more happy climes. It is undeniable, that the fœtus is affected by the objects with which the mother is ſtrongly impreſſed. That the different colours of different nations ariſe from external influence, is ſhewn by Dr. Mitchell, of Virginia, in the Phil. Tranſ. (3) The people on the cold elevations of Mount Atlas, were white; in the days of Procopius, the ſame phænomena appear in the Andes. The Jews are known to have been deſcended from one common ſtock, yet they are nearly of the ſame colour with the natives of the ſeveral countries which they inhabit. In Abyſſinia, they never intermarry with the natives, yet they are almoſt as black as they. It ſhould be conſidered, that civilized people, ſettling in theſe countries now, cannot ſo readily undergo a change; as being attentive to the preſervation of beauty; as not painting their naked bodies, and as availing themſelves of the many methods invented by time, for their ſecurity. (4) The Turks and Perſians came originally from Tartary; yet they do not at all reſemble the Tartars at preſent. How do the common deſcendants of the Teutonic Hords, differ at this day in their ſtature and features? The negroes, in the northern parts of America, ſoon change their colour,

(3) Gib. Decline, &c. vol. 7. (4) Moll's Geography.

lour, from a gloſſy black, to a dark unhealthy tawny. If Moſes had been born in ſome country, where he had no opportunity of ſeeing blacks, Deiſts might ſuppoſe that he erred thro' ignorance. But on the ſcheme of infidelity, this cannot be ſaid of one bred in Egypt, and particularly, if he was general of the Ethiopians, as Joſephus aſſerts. In this caſe, he muſt not only have ſeen them, but muſt have lived among them; and therefore, muſt have been as well aware of this difficulty as any man. I am certain, that he would have pleaſed the Jews better by ſaying, that they came of a ſtock, different from the reſt of mankind; but he was not writing a political romance. There is another conſideration, which will have great weight in deciding this matter. All ancient hiſtory bears teſtimony to the gradual colonization of the earth, and *that* from the eaſt; ſo that the deiſtical hypotheſis of mens being created in different quarters of the world, is contrary to fact and experience. Beſides, on this ſcheme of theirs, they are beſet with a difficulty, which, I believe, they will hardly anſwer. (5) For how comes it then, that in Chaldea, Egypt, and Paleſtine, (the countries ſaid in ſcripture to be poſſeſſed by Noah's poſterity,) civil and religious knowledge ſhould be ſo much better and earlier cultivated than in theſe others? Why ſhould not Europe, Africa, and America, be their equals, if all had juſt the ſame advantages, and were peopled at the ſame time? Indeed, the climate of Europe ſeems to be better adapted, for invigorating both mind and body, than theſe parts afore-mentioned.

(5) Hartley's Obſervations, &c.

oned. Why could not the Americans, on the coming of the Spaniards, ſhew any monuments or records above five hundred years old? Why was their country overgrown with wood, a ſure index of recent ſettlements? Why ſhould they ſacrifice, circumciſe their prieſts, have an eternal fire, a jubilee, let out their blood in devotion, like the prieſts of Baal, obſerve new moons, &c. if they were not deſcended from the common ſtock?

A deſire has been expreſſed to diſcredit the hiſtory of Moſes, from his placing the creation ſo low; which, however, in the eyes of all thinking men, is a ſtrong internal evidence of its truth. For this purpoſe, they are ſatisfied to build upon the fables in Ovid's Metamorphoſis, and on other ſtories, which the relaters themſelves do not ſeem to believe. Sometimes, the Egyptians are extolled for their great antiquity, and exactneſs in regiſtering events. But Diodorus ſays, that there was a difference of thirteen hundred years in their prieſts accounts; that they had no writings to vouch for their pretenſions; and that when preſſed, they acknowledged that their years were lunar months. Sir John Marſham has ſhewn, that they reckoned collateral dynaſties, as ſucceſſive. Thoſe inquiſitive men treat their pretenſions with contempt; while infidels, who never ſtudied their chronology at all, ſpeak highly of them. (6) The low ſtate of that neceſſary art, *Phyſic*, ſhews that they had no claim to ſuch remote antiquity. Herodotus relates, that they placed their ſick by the roads, in hopes of their being preſcribed for by paſſengers.

(6) Law's theory, &c.

paſſengers. (7) Solon, Herodotus, and Diodorus, viſited Egypt in ſucceſſive periods of time. According to the firſt, the wars of the great gods happened in the times of Cecrops; when the ſecond viſited them, they had thrown it farther back; and when the third travelled there, ſtill farther.

There is nothing among the Chaldeans more ancient than the era of Nabonaſſer, i. e. 747 years A. C. for the obſervations ſaid to be ſent to Ariſtotle by Calliſthenes, for 1093 years before Alexander's expedition, depend only on the authority of Porphyry. (8) But if we admit the obſervations of Calliſthenes, it will commence fourteen years after the beginning of Nimrod's reign, and ſo confirm the ſcripture, which makes him the firſt mighty one on the earth, who ſet up an empire. They are rejected, however, by Marſham (9), who ſays, *inter turbida incerta orientis tempora opportune exoritur æra Babyloniorum.* There is, in fact, the utmoſt darkneſs and confuſion in the hiſtory of the eaſt, as we have none of their own writers. The Greek hiſtorians copy the fabulous Cteſias, if you except Xenophon, and the Latins copy from them again. The oriental kings aſſumed many names which perplex their catalogue. Jerome ſays, that Sennacherib had ſix names, and this makes it often difficult to reconcile ſacred and profane hiſtory. (10) The Greeks added to the confuſion by their way of pronouncing Perſian names. Thus Xenophon calls one Tanaoxeres; Herodotus calls him Smerdis; Juſtin, Mergis. If the ſacred hiſtorians

(7) Prieſtley's Lectures on Hiſtory. (8) Shuckford's Con. vol. 1. (9) Canon Chron. lib. 4. (10) Prideaux's Con.

rians had done ſo, this would have been reckoned a contradiction. (11) When men ſpeak of ancient times, the Greeks and Romans are not to be named; even the former expreſſed remote periods by a circumſtance relatively modern, calling them *Tempora Ogygea.* (12) That the Chineſe knew little of aſtronomy, appears by the accounts given by the Jeſuits. *Caſſini* found that their calculations were wrong. Beſides, calculations of eclipſes for many years back, prove nothing, for it is as eaſy to reckon backwards as forwards. They ſuſpect their own records before the time of Fohi. Indeed there is one ſhort, but invincible argument againſt the idle pretenſions of them all, which is this: (13) If the world be ſo much older than Moſes has made it, why have we not ſome of their gems, medals, implements of wood and ſtone, which might laſt under ground for many thouſand years? Why have we no fragments of buildings, no monuments to bear teſtimony to the exiſtence of theſe mighty empires, theſe ſucceſſions of monarchs and heroes? Why did they invent no art or ſcience all this time? For, we can, in general, date the origin of them all, even the moſt neceſſary. (14) It was thought by ſome perſons, not long ſince, that they were furniſhed with a notable argument againſt Moſes, becauſe a lava which flowed from Etna two thouſand years ago, is not yet covered with vegetable earth, though there are ſix other lavas under it, covered therewith: but unfortunately for infidelity, Sir W. Hamilton found ſix lavas with good ſoil under

(11) Stillingfleet's Orig. Sac. (12) Jenkins's Reaſonableneſs, &c. (13) Berkeley's Min. Phil. (14) Watſon's Addreſs, &c.

under each of them, over the lava that overflowed Herculaneum, not one thouſand ſeven hundred years ago. This has demoliſhed their whole theory.

Objections have been made to the laws and ritual obſervance of the Jews; nay, many of them have been ſtyled prepoſterous. I believe it is impoſſible to make a charge better fitted to raiſe the indignation of a learned Chriſtian than this. All ſuch as have ſtudied their conſtitution with becoming care, have expreſſed their wonder at the ſurpriſing aptneſs in the different ordinances to produce the ends for which they were deſigned. Many laws, in every country, appear ridiculous in themſelves, till the reaſon of their enaction is declared, and then the apparent abſurdity ceaſes. Wherefore, let the reader of the Pentateuch conſider to whom theſe laws were given, and for what purpoſe. They were diſpenſed to a groſs and carnal-minded people, who had a ſtrong hankering after the pleaſures of idolatrous worſhip; yet one great deſign of the diſpenſation, was to keep them from idolatry. To accompliſh this, it was neceſſary to enjoin rites, in general directly contrary to thoſe of the neighbouring countries, to cut off all pretexts for mingling in their worſhip. Therefore, both Diodorus and Tacitus ſay, that *the Jews eſteem as profane, whatever other nations hold ſacred.* Will any man be fooliſh enough to declare, that injunctions for ſo valuable an end as this, were prepoſterous? Again, as this people were abject and ſullen, on coming out of the furnace of affliction in Egypt, this temper of mind gave riſe to other laws. Every good legiſlator muſt fit his laws to the capacity of his ſubjects; and, therefore,

fore, Solon is deſervedly praiſed for ſaying, that he gave the Athenians the beſt laws that they were capable of receiving. No being would treat a people emerging from barbariſm, and a people of refinement, in the ſame manner. It was neceſſary then to make allowance for obſtinacy and long contracted habits; to inſtitute a gorgeous form of external worſhip to ſtrike their imaginations; and, (as Jeſus Chriſt ſays,) *to permit ſome things for the hardneſs of their hearts.* I believe, it will be difficult to make out any thing prepoſterous in this. We learn from St. Paul, that ſome laws were given for tranſgreſſion, i. e. as a puniſhment for their ſins in the wilderneſs; (15) and the load of ordinances, was, in its nature, apt to induce them to receive Chriſt's goſpel with gratitude, which relieved them from ſo heavy a yoke. But the life and ſpirit of the ceremonial law, conſiſted in this, that it was the "ſhadow of good things to come." The antitheſis between the law and goſpel is truly wonderful. Seen through the medium of the goſpel, all its types and ſymbols have a ſignificancy that cannot be miſtaken, which adds to it the greateſt luſtre and beauty, and by which, we ſee that the Chriſtian ſcheme was always in the view of providence, to which, he, conforming to the allegorical genius of the eaſt, made this ſubſervient. When I conſider theſe things, together with the auguſt idea of God, which that law teaches me; when I conſider that precept, "I am the Lord your God, ye ſhall therefore ſanctify yourſelves, and ye ſhall be holy, for I am holy," with all the other precepts

(15) Jortins's Sermons, vol. 3.

cepts which extend even to the minutiæ of life, inculcating the moſt exalted piety and benevolence, I confeſs, that all other laws ſhrink into nothing before my eyes. How paltry does Lycurgus's iron money, his tables and nauſeous food appear, contraſted with the Jewiſh people ſitting, each under his vine and his fig-tree, from Dan to Beerſheba, rejoicing with the Levite, the fatherleſs, and the widow, before the Lord his God! Will his virgins, wreſtling naked, bear a compariſon with the modeſt daughters of Iſrael, dancing and exulting before Jehovah, in Shiloh? My Lord Bollingbroke ſays, ſneeringly, in his letters on hiſtory, that when he reads the Old Teſtament, he is tranſported into fairy-ground. So am I. I am ſo raviſhed with contemplating the happy times of the Jewiſh ſtate, that I am almoſt tempted to wiſh I had ran my courſe in thoſe days; to have ſeen the glory of Solomon's Temple; to have heard his wiſdom, and the ſongs of the ſweet ſinger of Iſrael, tuned to the harps and inſtruments of four thouſand Levites.

It has been aſſerted, that the order for deſtroying the Canaanites is inconſiſtent with the divine attributes. I ſuppoſe that they who make this objection, fancy, that God is, like the deity of Epicurus, regardleſs of what paſſes upon the earth; and thereby, they rob him of his moral attributes, which they would be thought to defend. For, if he be the Moral Governor of the world, he is to make a diſcrimination between the refractory and obedient; and to puniſh the former in whatever manner he may think fit. Now, the enormities of the Canaanites exceed every thing we have heard or read of. The ſhocking catalogue of their abominati-

ons may be ſeen in the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus, and traced in the practices of the Carthaginians, their deſcendants. Let any Deiſt read this chapter, and afterwards I would appeal to himſelf, (notwithſtanding that men of his deſcription are, in general, lenient to vice) whether ſuch monſters of impiety did not merit the moſt aggravated vengeance, and whether, in the energetic language of ſcripture, *The land itſelf was not ready to vomit out its inhabitants?* Let him in the next place conſider, that according to the view of things, given in the Jewiſh books, one reaſon why God ſelected that people, was, that by becoming their Gentilitious Deity, he might ſhew his power over the idols of the nations, and thereby convince the nations that he was the God of the whole earth. It is impoſſible to conceive any other method, ſo fit to teach this truth; and as ſuch an idea would not be apt to ſtrike an impoſtor, it is a great argument for the divinity of the books that ſuggeſt it. For, had theſe nations been deſtroyed by a peſtilence, earthquake, or famine, the ordinary miniſters of his wrath, it would not have been aſcribed to the God of Iſrael, rather than any other god: and it appears, from the hiſtory of thoſe times, that war was thought to be a trial of ſkill and power between their deities. No common judgments would make any impreſſion upon countries immerſed in ſenſuality and idolatry. Nothing leſs than the marked and dreadful devaſtation of Egypt and Paleſtine, was adequate to excite their attention. But the deſolation of theſe countries, ſhould have rouzed all the neighbouring, i. e. almoſt all the inhabitants of the earth, at that time, from their ſupineneſs, and made them regard this Jewiſh people, and their mighty God,

with

with a watchful eye. It is eaſy to ſee now, why this mode of deſtruction was preferred to any other. Beſides, the Jews, by being made the inſtruments of execution, ſhould naturally have been inſpired with an abhorrence of theſe ſins, which were to draw down a like puniſhment on their own heads, whenſoever committed by them. On this principle, we bring children to ſee executions. Accordingly, when Iſrael forſook his laws, and Jacob his ſtatutes, their country was made deſolate; their cities burned with fire, and *the daughter of Zion was left as a cottage in a vineyard; as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers.* What becomes, therefore, of all that idle babble about the great partiality ſhewn to the Iſraelites, on this occaſion? Whereas, if there was any, it was in favour of the Canaanites, who had the firſt trial, and poſſeſſion of the land, and who were not to be removed, till their iniquities were full. It is pretty certain, that even then, they were to be deſtroyed only as to their polity, and as nations; otherwiſe, Rahab, and the anceſtors of Uriah, the Hittite, could not have been ſaved. If ſome innocent ſuffered with the guilty, that is the caſe in every epidemic calamity. From this objection, it has appeared, how greatly the omiſſion of one circumſtance may change the features of a fact. For, to ſay that it is cruel to ſlay a nation of men, is true; and to ſay that it is cruel to cut off a man's head with an axe, is equally true; but when you are told that the man was a rebel, the moral turpitude ceaſes. Apply this to the caſe of the Canaanites.

Another cavil, of a very curious nature, has been brought againſt the ſcripture. It has been cenſured for not inſtructing men in aſtronomy. In any other caſe, it would be deemed extremely

abſurd to inveigh againſt a book, which propoſes to teach certain things, becauſe it did not alſo teach other things, which it never profeſſed to teach. Now, what do the ſcriptures profeſs? Why, to be *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs, and for making the man of God perfect.* (16) The ſchool of Paracelſus introduced the notion that philoſophy was taught in ſcripture; but to ſeek heaven and earth in it, is to ſeek temporal things among things eternal; to ſeek the dead among the living. Had Moſes revealed the true ſyſtem, it would have precluded all the induſtry and ingenuity ſince ſpent on the ſtudy; the daily and elaborate ſcrutiny, which the works of nature undergo, and which ſo elevates the mind. Beſides, he would have thrown a ſtumbling-block in the way of an obſtinate people, who might have taken offence at a ſyſtem, ſo contradictory to the phenomena, and of which, they, ignorant of the laws of motion and viſion, muſt think they could judge as well as any other. But it is very extraordinary, that though Moſes does not explain the true ſyſtem, yet neither he, or his ſucceſſor, ſay any thing contrary to it; for it does not follow, that they contradict it, by ſaying that the ſun ſtood ſtill, becauſe we at this day ſpeak in this manner, though we think otherwiſe; and many learned men have ſhewn, that the hiſtory of the creation agrees with the beſt modern diſcoveries. This deſerves a candid conſideration. For, if he wrote out a fanciful theory, why is it not perplexed with Cycles, Epicycles,

(16) Lord Bacon on the Advan. of Learn.

Epicycles, ſolid orbs, and the like jargon of ancient times?

There is a circumſtance running through the Old and New Teſtaments, which has puzzled many ſerious inquirers, owing to their unacquaintance with former manners. I ſpeak of the mode of information, by action. (17) In the firſt ages, when words were few, men made up the deficiency of ſpeech by action, as ſavages are obſerved to do at this day: ſo that conveying ideas by action, was as uſual, as conveying them by ſpeech. This practice, from its ſignificancy, and ſtrong tendency to imprint vivid pictures on the imagination, endured long after the reaſons for its origination ceaſed. It appears to have been confined to no particular country. The Scythians ſent Darius a mouſe, a frog, and a bird, which action ſpoke as plainly as words could do, and much more energetically, that he ſhould fly with all ſpeed to inacceſſible faſtneſſes. When the ſon of *Tarquinius Superbus* had counterfeited deſertion to *Gabii*, and had ſecured the confidence of the citizens, he ſent a truſty meſſenger to his father, to know how he ſhould conduct himſelf. *Tarquin* led him into a garden, ſtruck off the heads of the higheſt poppies in his preſence, which being related to *Sextus*, he knew that he ſhould take off the heads of the principal inhabitants. Conformable to this uſage, when Jacob feared the wrath of Eſau, an angel wreſtled with him; thereby ſignifying, that his apprehenſions were groundleſs; and that as he had prevailed with a divine being, ſo he ſhould be powerful over man; for the latter part of the twenty-

(17) Warburton's Div. Leg. vol. 3.

twenty-eighth verſe of the thirty-ſecond chapter of Geneſis, is tranſlated thus, in the Septuagint and Vulgate. Conformable to this, Ezekiel puts on a yoke, to repreſent the bondage of his countrymen, and walks without his upper garment, to repreſent their nakedneſs in captivity. Conformable to this, Jeſus Chriſt curſes the fig-tree, to prefigure the fate of a people, unfruitful in good works. Agabus binds himſelf with Paul's girdle, to prefigure the impriſonment of the latter; and a mighty angel, in the Revelation, caſts a huge ſtone into the ſea, ſaying, *Thus ſhall Babylon be caſt down, and found no more at all for ever.* At other times, this information was conveyed in viſions, and not literally tranſacted; as when Ezekiel is ſaid to lie many days on one ſide; to carry a wine-cup to the neighbouring kings; and to bury a book in the Euphrates. The reader muſt own now, that in this mode of inſtruction, there was nothing fanatic; for fanataciſm conſiſts in a fondneſs for unuſual actions, or modes of ſpeech; whereas theſe were general, and accommodated to the ruling taſte. (18) If God ſpoke in the language of eternity, who could underſtand him? (19) He, like the prophet, ſhrinks himſelf into the proportion of the child, which he means to revive.

SECT. VIII.

THE ſcriptures of the Old and New Teſtament derive their authority from being the word of God, and their authenticity from teſtimony.

(18) Smith on Prophecy. (19) Boyle on the Style of the Scriptures.

mony. We receive the writings of the Apoſtles, on the very ſame grounds, as we do thoſe of Cicero or Demoſthenes, i. e. on the witneſſing of cotemporaries and ſucceeding ages. I ſhall begin the proof of their authenticity, by two preſumptive arguments. In the firſt place, it is improbable, that the apoſtles would not commit their doctrines to writing; for this is what moſt introducers of new religions have done; as Moſes, Numa, Mahomet, &c. In the ſecond place, it is probable that they did; becauſe goſpels and epiſtles were afterwards forged under their names; and a forger always aſſumes the names of perſons who were known to have been authors. But that they did write, can be proved from fact; for many who lived either in the apoſtolic age, or who converſed with the immediate followers of the Apoſtles, quote the apoſtolic books in their own. The writers of that era are, Ignatius, Polycarp, Papias, Clemens, Hermas, Barnabas, and Ireneus. Out of thoſe, Dr. Jortin, in his Remarks on Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, gives extracts of quotations from the epiſtles and goſpels. Polycarp, in his epiſtle to the Philippians, refers near thirty times to the New Teſtament. (1) Clemens Romanus, who wrote to the Corinthians, ſo early as the year 69, makes mention of Paul's epiſtle to them. The apoſtles themſelves quote each other. As it was uſual with the Jews, when citing paſſages from ſcripture, to ſay merely, *it is written*, without mentioning the writer's name, ſo thoſe perſons ſometimes imitate that cuſtom; ſometimes they ſet down the ſayings of Chriſt, without any reference,

(1) Millii Prolegomena.

reference, and then we may ſuppoſe they took them from the preaching of the Apoſtles, which is an independent teſtimony to the veracity of theſe books; and ſometimes they ſet down ſayings of Chriſt, which have not been tranſmitted in the New Teſtament.

When we conſider, that half the firſt century had elapſed, before all the goſpels were compoſed, and that afterwards they were to be written out, by the ſlow proceſs of the hand, it muſt excite our admiration, to find them ſo univerſally cited in ſo ſhort a time. Nothing but the burning zeal of thoſe holy men, and a decided conviction of their being apoſtolical productions, can account for ſo wide a diffuſion. It appears, from the diſpute about Eaſter, that the early Chriſtians were rigidly tenacious of apoſtolic inſtitutions; and from the hiſtory of thoſe times it is manifeſt, that they were ready enough to diſpute every thing diſputable. Yet, there was a general acceptation of the goſpels, and of the greater part of the epiſtles, in all times and places. (2) Even the heretics admitted the goſpels in part, and forged others reſembling them. Many laid down their lives in thoſe days, on the ſtrength of the confidence they had in the truth of the New Teſtament. Their teſtimony for its genuineneſs, ſhould therefore be taken, rather than that of Jews or Pagans; as they were ſo materially concerned in what they admitted. It is an evidence, peculiar to this book, that it was the unqueſtionable worldly intereſt of the perſons who vouched and died for it, to renounce it before all men. (3) Nobody died for the truth of Cæſar's

(2) Jortins's Remarks, &c. (3) Skelton's Ophiomaches.

Cæſar's aſſaſſination; nobody was concerned at the peril of eternal damnation, to preſerve the records of it uncorrupted, or to prevent any impoſition.

Another evidence peculiar to this book, is, that it has been vouched for, not by one nation only, as other books are, but by multitudes of all nations; and quotations from it have been ſo numerous, on account of its importance, that had it been annihilated ſoon after its appearance, it could have been reſtored, by their help, to its original form. (4) But the copies written by the Apoſtles, were extant in the churches founded by them, in the days of Tertullian. His words are, "*quorum literæ authenticæ adhuc recitantur:*" and that *authenticus* is equivalent to *prototupos*, is ſhewn by Valeſius, in his notes on Euſebius. Their preſervation for two centuries is extraordinary, when it is conſidered, that the perſecuted Chriſtians had no archives, wherein to depoſit their records. From St. Paul's marking each epiſtle with his own hand, we may perceive how aſſiduous the Apoſtles were to prevent impoſitions. (5) Indeed, it would be hard for an impoſtor to imitate St. Paul; he is ſo warm, affectionate, and intereſting a writer.

The unvarying teſtimony of the primitive Chriſtians, might, if it ſtood alone, be deemed deciſive in this matter; but there are, happily, many internal circumſtances which evince the ſame thing. Thus, if the New Teſtament was forged two or three centuries after the time of the apoſtles, then you muſt ſuppoſe alſo, that the forgers

(4) Tertullian de Præſcriptione, &c. (5) Seed's Sermons.

forgers forged all the eccleſiaſtical books, written between that time, and the time of the Apoſtles: for the authors of theſe quote innumerable paſſages from the Apoſtles, and it will not ſuffice to ſay they were interpolated; for the parts that are not ſcripture, are founded on ſcripture, and are employed in reaſoning on texts: ſo that by this hypotheſis, perſons, without any aſſignable motive, and certain that they were putting their lives and properties in jeopardy, took upon them the labour of compoſing and writing out ſo many volumes, and then perſuaded immenſe multitudes of Chriſtians in all countries, that theſe had been in uſe among them, ſince the days of the Apoſtles. They have even increaſed the difficulty of this romantic ſcheme, ſeeing that they make mention of the particular churches, to which the epiſtles were directed. Now, it muſt be evident, that theſe churches would know that they had not received ſuch epiſtles, and by their means, all the Chriſtian churches in the world could have the ſame information. For, the epiſtles are not repreſented as ſent to one place, but to many. Thus, the Gauls and Italians might inquire at Rome; the Greeks at Corinth, or Philippi; the Aſiatics at Epheſus, Galatia, Theſſalonica, &c. It would be nonſenſe to ſay, that men *might* neglect ſuch means of information, when all their temporal proſpects depended on the choice which they made. Whoever reads of the horrid tortures which the firſt Chriſtians endured, according to the accounts of either Pagans or believers, will be perſuaded, that any man would ponder well, before he embraced the faith. Again, the goſpels ſay, that the Lord's ſupper, and an order of clergy, were inſtituted

inſtituted by Chriſt; and that the firſt day of the week was obſerved in commemoration of his reſurrection. But if the matters related in the goſpels were fictions of aftertimes, muſt not any perſon ſee, that there would have been no firſt day, no ſacrament, no order of clergy, at the time when they were written; ſo that they would carry with them their own confutation? Once more, the idea given of the primitive church, in the goſpels, is ſuch as was peculiar to the firſt century. There were variations in the ſecond, and if they were written then, we ſhould expect to have them tinctured with the opinions of the writers. Beſides, if written then, or at any later period, there muſt have been anachroniſms and errors in hiſtory; particularly, as there is a great deal of hiſtory in the New Teſtament. In a fiction of theory and ſpeculation, it would be difficult to keep clear of them; but in an hiſtorical one, it becomes almoſt impoſſible. Yet it is well known, to ſuch as have any ſhare of learning, that the Jews give the ſame accounts of characters as the evangeliſts. Joſephus mentions James, the brother of Chriſt; John the Baptiſt; Quirinus Pontius Pilate; Feſtus, Felix, Herod, Herodias; and in theſe things, agrees with the New Teſtament; ſo that it relates facts as they are related by cotemporaries; which is conſidered as a very proper teſt of genuineneſs. No profane authors have given an account different from theirs.

After the Jewiſh ſtate was deſtroyed, a man, writing goſpels, and mentioning laws, policy, ceremonies, juriſprudence, opinions, ſects, times and places, muſt have committed errors: but it has been remarked, that all the circumſtances of the

the judgment of Pilate, are exactly agreeable to the Roman law, for regulating provinces. Men of low extraction among the Jews could never have been ſo well acquainted with it, as not to have been deceived, if they had written down a fable, without copying from facts. (6) The goſpels of the ſeveral Evangeliſts, are alſo exhibited in ſuch a light, as we ſhould expect from their known manner of life. Thus, Matthew, a conſtant hearer of Chriſt, gives his narrations; Mark and Luke, writing from the report of eye-witneſſes, do not obſerve the order of time, but are regular in ſpecifying the places, as is natural for inquirers. John, the beloved, enters into the moſt myſterious and recondite part of his life.

But, it is not only on the credit of Chriſtian writers, and internal marks, that we receive theſe books; we have the concurrence of the ancient Jews, who perſecuted the Chriſtians with ſuch bitterneſs. Even Orobio, that moſt learned modern Jew, allows their genuineneſs. Not one of the Pagans called them in queſtion. They are admitted by Celſus, by Porphyry, by Hierocles, and by Julian. An abſtract of the goſpels might be taken from the writings of the firſt-mentioned. I do not find, that any Deiſt has rejected them; if you except Monſieur Freret, and two or three illiterate buffoons, like Toland. It is out of doubt, ſays my Lord Bollingbroke, that we have in our hands the goſpels of Matthew and John: he adds, theſe two channels were as ſufficient as four, to preſerve the doctrines in their purity; and their manner of recording, is much better than Plato's or Xenophon's; for they mention his

(6) Clayton's Vindication, &c. vol. 2.

his doctrine in the very words in which he taught them, and tell the occaſions on which he delivered them. Thus we have, as I may ſay, a redundancy of proof. In other works, men are content with one author for a voucher, or with a conformity in the ſtyle, or with the title; but in this matter, every ſort of argument is to be had.

The particular year in which each epiſtle and goſpel was written, cannot, at this day, be accurately aſcertained. It is, however, the unanimous voice of antiquity, that they were in general completed before the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. To write goſpels or epiſtles before churches were formed, wherein ſuch depoſits might be preſerved, would be nugatory; ſo that from the nature of the thing, ſome time muſt intervene between Chriſt's aſcenſion, and their compoſition. St. Matthew wrote very early, about the year of our Lord, 42; i. e. about eight years after his aſcenſion. (7) Pantænus, who, in the reign of Commodus, went to preach the goſpel in India, found there a copy of his goſpel, left by Bartholomew, the Apoſtle. Mark wrote his for the Chriſtians at Rome, according to Clemens, Pappias, and Euſebius; and Luke wrote his for the uſe of the Gentile converts. As thoſe three wrote at different times and places, and as each of them, in relating the ſame ſtory, follows a different method, one giving fewer or more circumſtances than another, it has been granted, that they never ſaw each others goſpels; and that they are, conſequently, three independent witneſſes, who did not concert together, to tell the

(7) Euſeb. Ec. Hiſ. Lib. 5.

the ſame things *totidem verbis*. St. John compoſed his goſpel as a ſupplement to the others; and it is likely, from ſome internal marks, that it was before the deſolation of Jeruſalem. Quadratus and others, carried the ſcripture of the divine goſpels into remote regions, in the beginning of the ſecond century. If the Evangeliſts had written, after the fulfilment of the prophecy againſt Jeruſalem, we muſt think they would have mentioned its completion with triumph; for Luke mentions the fulfilment of Agabus's prophecy about the dearth. It is certain, that the Acts, and moſt of the epiſtles, were written before the temple and Jewiſh polity were diſſolved; for after that, many of the queſtions and diſputes which ran through them would be uſeleſs, as they go on the ſuppoſition of a temple ſervice, and ſuch ordinances ſtill ſubſiſting. If the temple had been deſtroyed when Paul wrote, he would have uſed it as a great argument againſt the law.

(8) Ruffinus gives juſt the ſame catalogue of the books of the Old and New Teſtament, as that we receive at this day. He adds, "this is what our fathers have included in the canon;" from which manner of ſpeaking it appears, that it was ſettled long before his time. This manifeſts an extraordinary aſſiduity and zeal, when it is remembered with what jealous caution the primitive Chriſtians proceeded in ſettling this canon; with what ſuſpenſe they entertained ſome epiſtles, particularly general ones, whoſe genuineneſs it was difficult to aſcertain, as being directed to no particular church. It ſhould alſo be

(8) Expoſito Symboli.

be conſidered, that they were ſo haraſſed with perſecutions, that it was neither eaſy nor ſafe, to hold correſpondence with diſtant parts. The Fathers appear to me, not to have been ſo ſcrupulous in any thing, as in the admiſſion of books into the canon; inſomuch, that there is greater probability of their having omitted true, than having inſerted falſe. They actually appear to have examined with the ſcrupulouſneſs of a miſer, who looks over and over again at every piece, when he hears that counterfeit money is very common. Their liſts of counterfeit ſcriptures confirm this opinion. If we had none ſuch, men might have argued thus, "As there were heretics in theſe early times, it is very natural to ſuppoſe they would forge writings in ſupport of their opinions, which we ſhould expect to ſee in a catalogue of ſpurious productions; but as there is no ſuch catalogue, we are to conclude, that the primitive Chriſtians received every thing without examination, which bore the name of inſpiration."

I hope that the reader is convinced by this time, that the ſeveral parts of the New Teſtament were written by the authors whoſe names they bear. Now, when a book is written by an author, relating facts, to which he was a witneſs, theſe are as certain while the book continues, as they were at firſt; if you make allowance for the errors of tranſcribers. But, from the very nature and tendency of this volume, great ſtrictneſs would be uſed in tranſcription; and from the number of parallel paſſages and texts, enforcing the ſame doctrine, a various reading is eaſily reſtored. For this reaſon, among others which might be aſſigned, the Holy Spirit ſeems

to

to have preferred giving line upon line, precept upon precept, rather than a ſyſtematic delineation of duty. Whitby examined the various readings collected by Mills, and ſhews that no one article of faith is affected by them. The intrinſic excellence of the Old and New Teſtament at this day, demonſtrate that they are not corrupted. (9) It makes a great ſhew to ſay, ſo many copiers tranſcribing from other copiers, for ſo many ages, muſt have erred conſiderably: but all this talk is confuted by the Alexandrian manuſcript, which is twelve hundred years old; and yet it ſcarce differs at all from the preſent editions. Indeed, all the tragical lamentations made by Deiſts, about various readings, derive their origin from the candour and labours of Chriſtian divines. Who can affirm with truth, that he ever knew an infidel, who ſpent even one day in collating manuſcripts? The ignorance ſhewn in the objection, drawn from various readings, is well expoſed by that moſt learned critic, Dr. Bentley. (10) If, ſays he, we had only poſſeſſed one manuſcript of the New Teſtament at the revival of letters, there would be then no various readings: Would the text be therefore in a better ſtate? No: the various readings alone enable us to correct faults. Paterculus and Heſychius, (of which one copy only has been preſerved) are become a heap of errors, without a poſſibility of redreſs. If there was an inſertion in the New Teſtament, it would no more prove the corruption of the whole, than the four firſt ſuſpected lines of the Æneid prove the whole to be falſe.

I ſhall

(9) Berkely's Min. Phil. (10) Phileleutheros Lipſienſis.

I ſhall conclude this ſection with an obſervation, which has been often made already, about the impoſſibility of interpolating the ſcripture with ſucceſs. Whoever has the leaſt acquaintance with eccleſiaſtical antiquity, knows that many different verſions of it were made ſoon after its being written, and that they were diſperſed throughout the world. From hence it follows, that no man, or ſet of men, could get at the greater part of theſe copies, in order to corrupt them; and from their preſent ſtate it is clear, that no perſon could have any motives for doing ſo, as they neither exalt kings or clergy, magiſtrates or people, to the excluſion or detriment of the reſt. It is well known, alſo, that there were hereſies from the beginning, from which this eventual good redounded; that they regarded each other with jealous circumſpection, and were ready to detect any attempts at fraud. This was another bar to interpolation. From the hiſtory of the traditors, we learn that the ſcriptures were univerſally diffuſed among the people in the firſt centuries; and we gather from Jerome's preface to the Evangeliſts, that they watched over them with anxious ſolicitude: He herein expreſſes his fears to Pope Damaſus, that they would cry out againſt him, as ſacrilegious, and a falſifier, if he ſhould at any time give a word not found in the old verſions. It is probable, that our own time preſents as favourable an opportunity for corrupting the Bible, as any other ſince the Chriſtian era; and yet I believe, that, notwithſtanding our coldneſs, an impoſtor would find it a romantic project.

SECT. IX.

HAVING eſtabliſhed the genuineneſs of the Chriſtian and Jewiſh ſcriptures, and having adduced ſome perſuaſive reaſons for the Divine inſpiration of the latter, I am juſtified in proceeding to the arguments from prophecy and miracles which confirm both. There is a beautiful propriety in vouching for a divine revelation by theſe: by one, God is appealed to as the Author of Nature; by the other, as the Diſpoſer of events. The argument from prophecy is concluſive, and cannot be overturned; except by ſhewing, either that they were written after the event, or that God cannot foretell any thing. The latter ſuppoſition is inconſiſtent with the principles of ſound theiſm, and we have ſufficiently confuted the former.

It is to be lamented, that many, from inattention, frame to themſelves random ideas of prophecy, and then argue from their own wild and incoherent whimſies. Such a procedure is very unfair. (1) An unbeliever himſelf, ſhould go to the ſcriptures for its uſe and intent, to ſee what end it propoſes; and whether it was fitted to anſwer that end. If it was not, then he objects with ſome force. But, if he conceives before examination, that it ſhould anſwer ſome particular end, and ſo objects to it on that head, he does the ſame thing, as if a man cenſured me, after I profeſs only to write on the evidences of my religion, becauſe I had not alſo written on whatever

(1) Hurd on Prophecy.

whatever he ſhould happen to think of. (2) Now, according to the language of the New Teſtament, the primary object of the Old Teſtament predictions was the Meſſiah; for *the teſtimony of Jeſus is the ſpirit of prophecy.* To ſee this illuſtrated farther, conſult John, 5, 39; Luke, 24, 27; Acts, 3, 18; 1 Peter, 1, 10; and St. Paul ſeems to have written the Epiſtle to the Hebrews, to ſhew that Chriſt was prefigured in the Jewiſh law. This is the poſition, therefore, which an infidel ſhould ſet himſelf to impugn. To aſſault any other than this, is extraneous; it is only combating a phantom of his own raiſing. But I ſhall ſhew, in the courſe of this diſſertation, how viſionary ſuch an attempt would prove, by demonſtrating that the prophecies conduct an inquiſitive ſpirit, ſtep by ſtep, with an evidence as illuſtrious as that of the ſtar which went before the wiſe men, till it came and ſtood over where the young child was.

It ſhould be premiſed, however, that in reading the prophecies, men are apt to let this neceſſary idea ſlip out of their minds, viz. that they ſhould ſuppoſe them to be the inſpiration of God. I do not mean by this, that they ſhould have an aſſurance of their divinity, for this would be begging the queſtion; but that they ſhould remember, that the prophecies pretend to this character; and that, therefore, it would be uncandid to judge of them by rules of art. They are not to be tried by a human ſtandard; neither ſhould any man take upon himſelf to pronounce, what ſhould be the preciſe complexion of ſacred oracles. He might, indeed,

(2) Hurd on Prophecy.

reaſonably imagine, that the thoughts of the high and Mighty-One would deſcend unfettered by logical diſtinctions. *Lumen propheticum eſt lumen abruptum*, is an adage among the Jews. It dazzles the reader by rapid tranſitions, and leads the underſtanding captive, by a reſiſtleſs energy. It poſſeſſes not the feebleneſs of method. In the opinion of Cicero, this ſhould be the predominant feature of prophecy; for he concluded the oracles of the Sibyl to be forgeries, becauſe they bore the marks of laboured diligence. Hence it appears, that the want of accurate arrangement, objected to by Scioliſts, is in fact, an excellence; and that when the prophets paſs ſuddenly from denunciations to bleſſings, and from promiſes of temporal deliverance to that great redemption by Meſſiah, they are acting up to the ſpirit of divine prophecy. This is a fertile cauſe of theſe deviations, ſo frequent in their books; and it is inattention to theſe breaks in the connexion, which often prevents men from diſcerning the ſcope of paſſages. Their origin is not, however, to be attributed wholly to the cauſe I have mentioned. Many of them ſhould be aſcribed to the manner in which the detached pieces of the prophetic books were put together: for, as none of them ſeems to have been written in a continued ſeries, but to have had their various parts executed on various occaſions, and at different times; ſo it is manifeſt, that the order of writing was not regarded in their combination. This will be obvious to him who reads the two initial chapters of Iſaiah; for in the firſt, the land is repreſented as deſolate; in the ſecond, as flouriſhing in plenty. Hammond, Mede, and Kidder think, that

that the latter end of Zechariah was written by Jeremiah, as agreeing only with his time. (3) St. Matthew actually aſcribes the eleventh chapter of Zechariah to Jeremiah, which by the way, is a preſumption in favour of his inſpiration. An impoſtor and a publican would have taken things as he found them.

There are two other ſources of apparent diſorder. The prophets often connect the means of bringing about an end, with the end itſelf; and ſo introduce matter ſeemingly irrelative. Moreover, in their predictions concerning the Meſſiah, an attentive mind will obſerve, how they interweave with them other predictions, which were ſoon to be fulfilled. (4) The object of this, was to convince the world that they were prophets; and that the immediate accompliſhment of ſome, might teach the Jews to expect the accompliſhment of others in due ſeaſon; and ſo induce them to take care for their preſervation. All theſe things conſpire together to confuſe the heedleſs reader: him, who arrogantly imagines, that the deep things of God ſhould unfold themſelves before his ſlight and ſupercilious inſpection, and that he ſhould read them as he runs.

There is another circumſtance, which never fails to embarraſs perſons of this temper. As they are generally brought up in total unacquaintance with theological ſtudies, on looking into the prophecies, they find ſome words unintelligible, and from thence, gladly take occaſion to proſecute the ſtudy no farther. But it is not thus that a man conducts himſelf in any other purſuit

(3) Chap. 27. (4) Paſcal's Thoughts.

purſuit of a like nature. In firſt eſſays at law or phyſic, the terms are much more inexplicable; yet, if a man be ſerious, he will not on that account deſiſt; but have recourſe to books which may fix their import. Now, that the meaning of prophetic language can be as readily aſcertained as the language of law, may be ſeen from Dr. Lancaſter's Symbolic Dictionary, and from the ſecond chapter of Sir Iſaac Newton on Daniel. (5) The prophets themſelves often explain their own language. When Daniel would expreſs a common week, he ſays a *week of days*: When Iſaiah would diſtinguiſh a prophetic year from a natural, he calls the latter the *year of an hireling*. In the fourth chapter of Ezekiel, a day is ſaid to ſtand for a year. When Daniel ſpoke of ſeventy weeks abſolutely, the Jews knew that he meant weeks of years, as ſhall appear in the ſequel. Weeks of years were familiar to that people, on account of their ſabbatic years, and Jubilees. Theſe things being ſo, a Roman philoſopher could not cry out, as Mr. Gibbon thinks he would, in the words of Cicero (6); "*Quæ tandem iſta auguratio eſt, annorum potius quam menſium aut dierum?*" At leaſt, he would make this exclamation unjuſtly, becauſe with ordinary pains he might aſſure himſelf, that the words had a preciſe and determinate meaning in the Jewiſh phraſeology.

I preſume to think, that a reader of the prophecies will find theſe general obſervations uſeful in the application. There is another, peculiar to the predictions which relate to Chriſt. For, of theſe, ſome are capable of a double reference,

(5) Lowth on Daniel. (6) De Diviratione, lib. 2.

ference, i. e. they might be applied to perſons or things typical of the Meſſiah, which is conſonant enough in a diſpenſation fraught with adumbrations. Though the modern Jews do, for obvious reaſons, reject this application of prophecy, yet it is evident, that it was a received notion among their anceſtors. Who can bring himſelf to think, that if the Apoſtles had applied ſo many prophecies to Chriſt, in a ſenſe never before heard of, they would, notwithſtanding, have brought over ſo many prieſts and rulers to the obedience of the faith? St. Matthew, writing for the Jews, makes more uſe of them than any other Evangeliſt. Baſnage has ſhewn, that the Jews, in their cabals, have puſhed a ſimilar mode of explication to a truly ridiculous length, though they will not allow it in the Prophets. Yet it can be demonſtrated, that they thought otherwiſe of old, from their admitting the Song of Solomon into their canon, which can have no other than a myſtical ſenſe there, while they excluded his parables; down from that on the cedar of Libanus, to that on the hyſſop which groweth againſt the wall. In this way of application, there is not that latitude for the imagination, which ſome wiſh to intinuate. Though the words of Caiaphas, for inſtance, will admit fairly of two ſenſes, they will not admit of as many as men may pleaſe to put on them. In the ſame manner, Horace's Ode, *O navis*, &c. will admit of two ſenſes, and no more. The prophecies to be taken in a double acceptation, are few in number; the greater part of them are deciſive and expreſs; though ſome, as applied to Chriſt, are indirect, and ſome, probably, only alluſive; as when we ſay, "thus is the old proverb verified,

verified," we do not mean that the proverb was made for that event, of which we ſpeak; but that it may be accommodated thereto. The Apoſtles, following the phraſeology of the Jews, might adopt a like mode of expreſſion.

For reaſons which ſhall be given hereafter, it is in the nature of prophecy to be interpreted fully by the event alone. Daniel declares that he did not underſtand his own prophecies. (7) It is curious enough, to ſee Virgil contriving the predictions of the Eneid in ſuch a manner, as not to be well underſtood before the completion. He either copied after nature, which taught him that Heaven would be apt to communicate ſo with mortals, as to excite their hopes and fears; or he deduced this rule from ancient tradition, handing down the method followed by God in his conduct towards men. It is alſo remarkable, that the prophetic parts of his poem are regulated in ſuch a manner, as to open by degrees. The predictions concerning Jeſus Chriſt gradually unfold themſelves in the ſame way, and expand, till at length, "the day-ſtar from on high riſes in our hearts." Thus, immediately after the fall, it was declared to Adam, "that the Seed of the woman ſhould bruiſe the ſerpent's head;" from which he learned, that at ſome time, (but when, or in what manner, he knew not) a perſon born of a woman would hurt the Tempter materially. After that, it was declared to Abraham, that in him ſhould all the families of the earth be bleſſed. After an interval, Judah, one of his deſcendants, had a promiſe made to his ſeed, that "the ſceptre ſhould not depart

(7) Clayton on Prophecy.

part from it, till *Shiloh* came, and that to him ſhould the gathering of the Gentiles be." (8) Tho' theſe prophecies were obſcure, yet they were interpreted of the Meſſiah, even before his advent, in the targum of Onkelos. The targums are paraphraſes of the Hebrew ſcriptures made into Chaldee, for the uſe of ſuch Jews as had learned that language in the captivity. They are of prodigious ſervice to us Chriſtians; for as they were written before the coming of Chriſt, they ſpeak the unbiaſſed ſenſe of many prophecies, which the Jews wiſhed afterwards to pervert. The next promiſe was made to David, ſo that by this, the bleſſing was limited to a particular family of the tribe of Judah; and David was probably raiſed to the throne, that he might make the genealogy of that family more remarkable, from whence Meſſiah was to ſpring. (9) Iſaiah propheſies of him, that he was to be born of a virgin (10); that he was to open the eyes of the blind, the ears of the deaf, to make the lame walk, and the dumb to ſpeak; that he was to be deſpiſed, and rejected of men; a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief; that he was to bear the chaſtiſement of our peace; to be numbered with the tranſgreſſors, and to make interceſſion for them. I would recommend the reading of the whole 53d Chapter of Iſaiah to a Deiſt: it has converted many infidels. The targum of Jonathan, written before Chriſt, applies it to the Meſſiah; and many of the modern Jews, not able to baffle the true meaning of this prophecy, have invented the fiction of two Meſſiahs,

(8) Prid. Con. Lib. 8. (9) Chap. 7. (10) Chap. 27. (11) Chap. 53.

Meſſiahs, one a ſufferer, the other a conqueror. (12) Orobio, that moſt learned Jew, does not deny but that it may relate to the Chriſt. The evangelic Prophet declares moreover, (13) that the government was to be on his ſhoulders; and that of his dominion there was to be no end; that he was to be the father of the age or diſpenſation to come; (14) that God was to put his Spirit upon him; that he was to bring judgment to the Gentiles, and the iſles were to wait for his law. (15) Jeremiah propheſies, that he was to make a new covenant with the houſe of Judah; not ſuch as he made with their fathers; that he was to put his law in their inward parts, and to write it on their hearts. Zechariah ſpeaks of him as coming meek, and having ſalvation, riding upon an aſs. A Jew, following the dictates of fancy, would have drawn him as a triumphant conqueror. (16) He was to be ſold for thirty pieces of ſilver. (17) David predicts the piercing of his hands and feet; their caſting lots for his garment; (18) their giving him gall to eat, and vinegar to drink; (19) his not ſeeing corruption. (20) Haggai ſays, that the Deſire of all nations was to come in the ſecond temple, and to make its glory greater than the glory of Solomon's. Malachi writes, that the Angel of the covenant would ſoon come into his temple. (21) Daniel propheſies of his kingdom, that it was to break in pieces the old monarchies of the earth; that it was to laſt for ever, and that all people and tongues were to ſerve him; (22) that Meſſiah the Prince was to

(12) Limborch's Amica Col. (13) Chap. 9. (14) Chap. 42. (15) Chap. 9. (16) Chap. 11. (17) Pſalm 21. (18) Pſalm 68. (19) Pſalm 15. (20) Chap. 2. (21) Daniel, Chap. 2. (22) Chap. 9.

to come in ſeventy weeks, from the going forth of the decree to rebuild Jeruſalem; that he was to be cut off; that the people of the prince who was to come with the abomination of deſolation, would then deſtroy the city and ſanctuary, and that the end thereof would be with a flood or great ruin.

Let a Deiſt read this ninth chapter of Daniel, and then let him conſult the learned Prideaux' Connexion of the hiſtory of the Old and New Teſtament. In the former, he will find the ſeventy weeks divided into three portions; *ſeven, ſixty-two, one*; and in the latter he will learn, that from the decree given to Ezra, in the ſeventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes, to the finiſhing the works by Nehemiah, was ſeven weeks of years; from that till Chriſt's appearing in the miniſtry by John, is juſt ſixty-two weeks; of the laſt week, John preached three years and a half to confirm the covenant, and Jeſus, three other years and a half, which ends this laſt week. Now, let him lay all theſe prophecies together, with many others which he will find by reading the ſcriptures, but which I, ſtudious of brevity, have omitted; and after he has meditated upon them as they deſerve, I am confident, that unleſs he has hardened himſelf againſt conviction, he will own that Jeſus Chriſt, in whom all theſe were accompliſhed, is of a truth, the Prophet of God. For, of the things foretold of him, ſome were miraculous, ſome improbable, ſome ſeemingly irreconcileable, beyond the reach of all human conjecture; as when it is ſaid, that he ſhould be cut off, and yet reign for ever; that he ſhould pour out his ſoul to death, and yet prolong his days: yet were they fulfilled in him alone; he never

never had any rival or antagoniſt, to make his authority doubtful.

I have hinted already, that the Jews originally applied moſt of theſe prophecies in the ſame ſenſe with Chriſtians. This appears from their own books. However, as was natural to imagine, they have, ſince the coming of Chriſt, endeavoured to refer ſome of them to others. Theſe groſs prevarications are ably detected and expoſed in biſhop Kidder's demonſtration of the Meſſias. Indeed it requires but little candour in any man to be convinced of the abſurdity of ſuch ſubterfuges. For is it not evident to him, that there is no general character given of any one, which may not in ſome reſpects agree with others? But this can never be called fulfilling that character, unleſs the ſeveral parts agree in one; for as the prophecies are connected, and depend upon each other, they cannot have been fulfilled in any one, unleſs they have been fulfilled *altogether* in that one: (23) ſo that unleſs we can find a man who has made reconciliation for iniquity, was a bleſſing to nations, had a ſpirit of prophecy, was a light to the Gentiles, brought a new covenant, wrought miracles, led a life of affliction, after death did not ſee corruption, then poured out an effuſion of gifts upon all people, was born at Bethlehem, of the ſeed of David, came during the ſecond temple, at the end of Daniel's weeks, having a meſſenger before him like Elias; I ſay unleſs we find ſuch an one, the prophecies have not been fulfilled: but if we do, then we may ſay, "We have found him of whom

(23) Burnet's Sermons at Boyle's Lec.

whom Moſes in the law, and the prophets did write."

It is right that the reader ſhould reflect here, on the great number of circumſtances which muſt neceſſarily have concurred to give Chriſt the character of the Meſſiah, and which could not poſſibly have been brought about by his agency; for many of the oracles concerning him were contingent, depending upon his enemies for their completion. As in an enigma of great extent, when we find a ſolution where every thing ſquares exactly, we are aſſured that this is its true ſenſe; juſt ſo we know that Jeſus Chriſt is the end of the law and the prophets. (24) Were we at liberty to apply the prophecies of the Old Teſtament to the whole hiſtory of mankind, in this great extent there might be room for imaginary reſemblances, though it is ſtill improbable that any one would anſwer in every part; but by the ſcripture ſcheme we are narrowed, and bound to apply them to one perſon of the Jewiſh nation, coming at a certain time. It is this coincidence, together with their concatenation, which raiſes the argument from prophecy ſo high; for ſolitary, independent events might poſſibly be gueſſed at; but here you are to judge from the whole chain; juſt as you would judge of a ſyſtem of philoſophy, not by a ſingle inſtance, but by the harmony of the whole. Therefore, where any prophecies are applied to Chriſt, upon apparently ſlight grounds, a fair inquirer will recollect that the prophecies concerning him are not detached predictions, like Pagan oracles, but that they form a ſyſtem; and that as ſome lineaments

(24) Hurd on Prophecy.

ments of a picture have little reſemblance to the original, if ſuffered to remain unconnected, which may yet be indiſpenſable on a union of parts; ſo it is with theſe prophecies; they are as neceſſary as the more ſtriking features, to the perfection of the whole.

The Jews then, did not reject Jeſus Chriſt, becauſe he did not fulfil the prophecies; but becauſe he did not accord with their carnal and ſenſual ideas. If the prophecies have not been fulfilled according to their meaning, we may ſay with Tully, (25) *Falſa ſunt non rerum vitio, ſed interpretum inſcitiâ.* By their explications, nothing was left for the Meſſiah himſelf to declare. If it was ſaid, that the government was to be upon his ſhoulders, and that all nations were to worſhip upon his holy mountain, inſtead of waiting to know by the event, what ſort of government was intended, they themſelves commenced prophets, and would have it to be a kingdom of this world. It ſignified nothing, that he was to erect a ſpiritual dominion in the hearts of men; that he was to collect a church out of all the nations of the earth; that he was to exerciſe the office of a king in giving it laws, in protecting it againſt enemies, and in puniſhing them, together with his own rebellious ſubjects; ſo long as he did not literally rear up the fallen throne of David, make the Jews lords of the univerſe, and bring over all nations to their worſhip, by the ſplendour of his kingdom. A groſs idea this, by which all merit is excluded in obeying and believing on ſuch a Meſſiah.

But

(25) De Divinatione, Lib. 1.

But it is proper to ſhew, before we leave this head, that the Jews expected the Chriſt about the reign of Auguſtus, and conſequently, had been calculating Daniel's weeks, and applying them to him, as every one muſt do, who will be guided by the plain import of the words, ſeeing that he is even mentioned by name. It is remarked by Joſephus, that Daniel excelled the other prophets in this; that he determined the time when the prophecy would come to paſs. (26) He declares expreſsly, that the Jews were ſtirred up to rebel by a prediction, that about that time there ſhould ariſe one from among themſelves, who would rule over the whole world. (27) It was then only, that they began to apply the names of the Meſſiah to others: they never gave them to the Maccabees, or any former deliverers. (28) The Talmudiſts ſay, that the time of the Chriſt's coming was predicted in the Hagiographa. (29) Rabbi Nehimias, who lived fifty years before Jeſus, ſaid, that the coming of Meſſiah could not be deferred above fifty years. (30) Rabbis of latter times, have endeavoured to apply the ſeventy weeks to one Agrippa, who was put to death by Veſpaſian, which, by the way, is an evident proof that they knew the weeks to be weeks of years. (31) Tacitus, ſpeaking of that period acknowledges, that many were perſuaded from a prophecy, that at that time the Eaſt would prevail, and that one going forth from Judea, ſhould poſſeſs the univerſe. Sueto-nius relates the ſame thing. On the ſtrength of this rumour, Domitian ſummoned before him the

(26) De Bel. Jud. Lib. 6. (27) Boſſuet's Introduct.
(28) Hook's Princip. vol 2. (29) Grotius de Verit.
(30) Baſnage's Hiſt. (31) Hiſt. Lib. 5.

the relations of Chriſt, and diſcharged them on perceiving their innocence, and hands callous with labour. From that period, the Jews have been the ſport of impoſtors. They have been ſmitten with madneſs, with blindneſs, with aſtoniſhment of heart. They have recurred to the moſt wild and jejune expoſitions of prophecy; to meanings utterly incompatible with the context, and with their own ancient interpretations. Thus, Solomon Jarchi, in his Commentary on the twenty-ſecond Pſalm, ſays: "our great maſters have interpreted this pſalm of Meſſiah, but I ſhall interpret it of David himſelf, to have wherewith to anſwer the heretics;" meaning the Chriſtians. From theſe circumſtances the reader will learn, how ridiculous this deiſtical inference is, viz. that the prophecies about Jeſus Chriſt are not to be credited, becauſe *we* give to ſome of them one ſenſe, and the *Jews* another. (32) He will conſider their modern gloſſes as beneath contempt, when he is informed, that *ſapientes prophetis præſtantiores*, is a proverb in their Talmud, by which they mean that they prefer their explications to the natural meaning of the prophets words.

I think I have demonſtrated now, that the Old Teſtament predictions anſwered the end for which they were deſigned; for the Jews knew that a Meſſiah was to come, and the time and place.

It was obſerved before, that the prophets interwove other matters with what they foretold of Chriſt. God, to ſhew that he was the God of all the earth, declared what would befall the great

(32) Vandale de Idolatria, &c.

great nations of thoſe days. But if I entered into a diſtinct conſideration of this illuſtrious web of prophecies, it would protract the ſection too much; and therefore, I refer to Biſhop Newton for ample ſatisfaction on this head. However, it would be doing great injuſtice to this argument, if I did not here apprize the reader, that the concomitant circumſtances attending the downfall of ſo many realms, are generally related by the Prophets. This is an unſurmountable bar in the way of a Deiſt, when he would ſtrive to prove, that by foretelling the ruin of ſo many places in general terms, a man gains no pretenſions to prophecy. I ſhall inſtance the concomitant circumſtances in the caſe of Babylon. Iſaiah, beſides denouncing its deſtruction, declared that the Medes would be its deſtroyers; a nation of no account, at the time he gave the prophecy. It was ſaid, that the river ſhould be dried up: now, every one knows that Babylon was taken by diverting the courſe of the Euphrates. It was ſaid, that 'a ſnare ſhould be laid for her;' that 'ſhe ſhould not be aware;' that 'her princes, her wiſe men, and her captains were to be made drunken;' that 'they were to ſleep a perpetual ſleep:' accordingly, it is known to all, that the city was taken at an annual feſtival, when the inhabitants were revelling. 'The wild beaſts of the deſart were to lie there;' and accordingly, in Jerome's time, it was turned into a park for hunting wild beaſts; 'ſerpents and doleful creatures were to lie in her pleaſant palaces;' and modern travellers relate how it is dreadfully infeſted with them; 'it was to be a poſſeſſion for the bittern, and pools of water;' hiſtorians have ſhewn how the ſurrounding plain

became a marſh; 'it was to be a deſolation without inhabitant,' and ſo it is a ſolitary wilderneſs. Here are a number of events, which no human ſagacity could foreſee, fulfilled at different intervals, for many hundreds of years.

I ſhall conclude what I have to ſay on the prophecies of the Old Teſtament, with ſome obſervations on that extraordinary one delivered by Moſes, concerning the preſent ſtate of the Jews. (33) He foretold of them, that 'they ſhould become an aſtoniſhment, and a by-word among all the nations whither the Lord would lead them;' that 'they were to be ſcattered among all people, from one end of the earth to the other; and that they ſhould be deſtroyed by *diſtant* perſons, whoſe language they could not underſtand.' Here is a prophecy uttered three thouſand years ago, and it muſt be confeſſed, that its completion was exceedingly improbable. For, where was the likelihood that this ſmall nation ſhould be a proverb among others; and above all, that it ſhould be ſcattered into all kingdoms? Neither of theſe circumſtances has befallen any other captives, ſince the beginning of the world; ſo that Moſes could not from analogy infer this, but the contrary. Indeed, their unaccountable ſituation has ever perplexed the infidel, and prompted the Chriſtian to adore the unſearchable ways of God. For, where are the deſcendants of theſe nations, which of old time ruled the earth? (34) The Jews have buried them all, and preſerve themſelves a people, without any of the ordinary ligaments of ſociety. They have had neither

(33) Deut. 28. (34) Vide Jeremiah, chap. 30, verſe 11.

neither lands, cities, magiſtrates, privileges, or ſecurity of property. By ſinking into the maſs of the people, they would obtain all theſe. If, indeed, the performance of their law was agreeable, it might be thought to counterbalance theſe bleſſings; but it is known to be exceedingly irkſome, even as obſerved in their diſperſion, and its promiſes being chiefly temporal, which are never made good to them, renders their obſtinacy in its obſervance ſtill more extraordinary. (35) If they lived together in large communities, their caſe would not be ſo odd; but they are ſplit into ſmall parcels, ſometimes, not three hundred in a kingdom, and therefore, without ſupernatural interpoſition, they muſt have long ſince incorporated with the body of the people, as all other colonies have done. They are a ſtanding miracle, fulfilling their own prophecies, and guarding thoſe which prove the truth of our religion. We have our enemies vouching for their genuineneſs. (36) Had the Jews univerſally embraced Chriſtianity in the beginning, Infidels would ſay now that the prophecies of a ſuffering Meſſiah were ſince forged; but in the preſent circumſtances, that aſſertion is ridiculous. In ſhort, the Jews are thus wonderfully preſerved, to anſwer ſome ſtriking ends of Providence; and their future converſion may be ſtill more ſurprizing than their preſent condition. Even Voltaire himſelf (than whom, no one ever aſperſed their nation with more calumnies,) allows that they merit well the attention of a philoſopher.

(35) Hurd on Prophecy. (36) Addiſon's Eviden.

I have made no obſervations on that ſplendid train of predictions in Daniel, and the Revelations; though, as Biſhop Newton obſerves, they make us walk by ſight, and not by faith, they are in general ſo very plain. What Porphyry ſaid of the Book of Daniel, is known to every noviciate in divinity. He, in contradiction to all the rules of juſt criticiſm, and though it had even been tranſlated into Greek before that era, yet aſſerted that it was written after the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, merely becauſe its predictions were ſo clear, that they ſeemed to be an hiſtory rather than a prophecy. Had he lived in our days, he might for the ſame reaſon ſay, that it was written after the reformation. I am perſuaded, that a large portion of the predictions in thoſe books, relate to certain corruptions in the Chriſtian church. I ſhall, therefore, paſs them over; if I did not, what Moſes ſaid to the two contending Iſraelites, might be objected here, "*Why ſtrive ye, becauſe ye are brethren?*"

I ſhall content myſelf with ſpeaking of one prophecy only in the New Teſtament. It is that uttered by Jeſus Chriſt, about the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. Whoſoever knows any thing of the hiſtory of that period, will ſay, that there never was a prediction, whoſe accompliſhment was more utterly improbable than this. For no perſon, humanly ſpeaking, could think that the Jews would be ſo mad, as to reſiſt the Roman Empire in its zenith, eſpecially when a ſtrong garriſon occupied the place. But he did not confine himſelf to this improbability; he aſſerted, moreover, that before that time, i. e. before forty years, his goſpel would be preached in all the kingdoms of the earth, which was the uſual phraſeology

phraſeology for the Roman Empire. According to the manners and reaſonings of that age, the notion of a religion's being preached every where, and becoming in proceſs of time univerſal, was the moſt wild and frantic that could be deviſed. The idea of an œcumenical religion was unknown in the ancient world. It appeared ridiculous to Celſus, to ſay that this *grain of muſtard-ſeed* ſhould ſpread over the whole earth. To theſe two, he has even added a third improbability, which is, that the Apoſtles ſhould be called before kings and governors for his ſake, when the Epicureans, who denied a Providence, were tolerated. Throughout this whole prophecy, there is nothing left general and indeterminate; and, contrary to the uſual prophetic ſtyle, it has few figures. That generation was not to paſs, till all ſhould be fulfilled. An impoſtor would have laid the ſcene farther back, and not have damned his ſect ſo ſoon. But, beſides this, he predicted all the preceding ſigns and circumſtances of the deſtruction, as falſe Prophets, falſe Chriſts, famines, earthquakes, dreadful ſlaughter, ſuch as was not from the beginning of the world. The completion of theſe is atteſted by Joſephus, an eye-witneſs, who declares, that eleven hundred thouſand Jews periſhed in the ſiege; for they had come from all parts to keep the paſſover at that time. He foretold ſigns from Heaven. Joſephus and Tacitus mention many. He foretold how brother would riſe againſt brother, and father againſt ſon. This was unlikely, for on ſuch occaſions, mutinies are generally huſhed; all parties coaleſcing to oppoſe the common enemy; yet the Jewiſh hiſtorian relates how dreadfully the town was torn by factions, ſo that they

they often fought pitched battles within the walls. He desired his followers to flee, when they should see *the abomination of desolation*, (i. e. the Roman eagles which the soldiers worshipped,) and Jerusalem encompassed with armies. This advice must have appeared absurd, when first delivered; for how could they fly from a city beleaguered round? But can we help being confounded and astonished, when we are assured by Josephus, (37) that the Roman forces under Gallus did, without any apparent cause, withdraw again, after they had invested Jerusalem; and when we learn from Eusebius (38), that in the mean time, the Christians, mindful of Christ's warning, retired to Pella, a town beyond Jordan? It was said, "that not one stone should be left upon another," and accordingly the foundation was razed with the plough. It was unlikely that this part of the prophecy should have its completion; for it was not the custom of the Romans to ruin their provinces; and we know, that in fact, Titus, who, for the sweetness of his disposition, was called *the delight of mankind*, was very unwilling to destroy Jerusalem. In short, Dr. Jortin (39) has summed up twenty-two events, which are included in this prophecy, and by an induction of particulars, he makes their accomplishment manifest. I have explained already, how impossible it was to interpolate the New Testament; but least of all, can such a suspicion fall on this prophecy (40); for the passages referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, are mentioned incidentally in nineteen places, up and

(37) De Bel. Jud. Lib. 2. (38) Eccles. His. Lib. 3. (39) Remarks on Eccles. His. vol. 1. (40) Jortin's Remarks, &c. vol. 1.

and down the Evangeliſts, as anſwers to queſtions, &c. ſo that ſuch inſertions, if they were practicable ſo long after the goſpels were diſperſed throughout the world, muſt have altered them very materially. Beſides, he tells the fact plainly; but as to the preciſe time, he is obſcure, to perplex the unbelieving Jews, which obſcurity would be needleſs, if this was forged afterwards; it would make a greater ſhew to determine the very time. But if any perſon forged it afterwards, (which is abſolutely impoſſible, conſidering the circumſtances) how could he propheſy that Jeruſalem ſhould be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the time of the Gentiles ſhould be fulfilled? We are certain, that the Chriſtians were always ſaying that Jeruſalem would be deſtroyed, from the accuſation brought againſt Stephen. Here, then, is a plain and decided prophecy, beyond the reach of evaſion. I cannot conceive how it is poſſible for any man who reads it, with all the other prophecies, and then ſees their fulfilment, as confirmed by Heathens, to continue obſtinate in unbelief; neither, indeed, would any one, if he ſuffered himſelf to be determined by force of evidence, rather than by carnal luſts. For how can a Deiſt, on his principles, account for theſe things? We have eſtabliſhed the authenticity of the books. If he denies this, he muſt give ſome better reaſon than bare aſſertion for his denial (41); he muſt account for the many quotations made from theſe books, ever ſince the time in which Chriſtians ſay they were written; or he muſt rather deny the authenticity of all the books written ever ſince,

(41) Ben. Mor. Apol. vol. 1.

ſince, in which ſuch quotations are found; or if he allows them to be genuine, and not inſpired, then he muſt account how by conjecture, men ſome thouſands of years ago foretold things now coming to paſs. If a Deiſt would give himſelf time to reflect on the conſequences of his ſcheme, he would find it to be a labyrinth of perplexity. But as this would exhauſt ſome of the time which he wiſhes to ſpend in a way more agreeable to fleſh and blood, he generally contents himſelf with ſome ſneer or witticiſm, which rarely fails to raiſe a laugh as loud as that of Vulfenius, in the Satires of Perſius.

I have obſerved already, that many prophecies are clear and expreſs. The remarkable one, juſt now commented upon, falls under this deſcription. It may be remarked, that ſuch as would be little regarded by the perſons fulfilling them, are the plaineſt. Thus, Alexander is deſcribed in Daniel, almoſt as manifeſtly as if he had been named. Cyrus is named, and his ſucceſs predicted. But when they are to be inſpected narrowly, by ſuch as give them their accompliſhment, they are wrapped up in terms more myſterious. Their meaning is then to be developed in the ſame manner as you would that of a ſatiric piece, where there is no name given; but it is left to the reader's attention, to find out whom the writer intended to deſcribe. For as theſe depend on free agents for their completion, if delivered plainly at firſt, they would ſeem to abridge the liberty of human actions, and would introduce confuſion. (42) Thus, if it had been foretold, that preciſely on ſuch a day Jeſus would be

(42) Nicole's Confer. &c.

be born at Bethlehem, the Jews would have crowded round the place, borne him about in triumph, ſo as to have brought the Romans on them immediately; and thereby he would have been prevented from putting his leſſons of humility and long-ſuffering in practice. If Judas had been plainly deſcribed, he would have been torn in pieces, unleſs God would work miracles for his preſervation. We know, that in the caſe of rebuilding the temple of Jeruſalem, (a work undertaken in direct oppoſition to our Saviour's prophecy,) it was neceſſary to work a ſurprizing miracle to defeat the project. Probably, God permitted it, for this, among other reaſons, to ſhew men what would be the conſequence, if prophecy was as plain as a hiſtory. One of theſe two things muſt, in my opinion, neceſſarily have happened. Either unbelievers would endeavour to counteract them, and ſo oblige God to interfere miraculouſly; or when a Chriſtian, or nation of Chriſtians would fulfil them; then an unbeliever would ſay, that this was no argument for their divinity, more than it would be in favour of his own divine inſpiration, if he foretold ſomething; and that a friend of his fulfilled it, from a regard to his character. (43) There is another reflection, which muſt appear perfectly ſatisfactory to any perſon who will take time to conſider. It is this: If the future good fortune of a nation or individual was declared to them, it would make them proud and careleſs; if future miſery, it would take off the zeſt from all preſent bleſſings, while they expected their impending fate with horror. Both caſes would ſuppreſs

(43) Jenkins's Reaſonab. &c. vol. 2.

ſuppreſs all induſtry and exertion. Fore-knowledge, ſays my Lord Kaimes (44), would be a gift more pernicious than Pandora's box. There is, therefore, the ſame reaſon for concealing ſome prophecies, as there is for concealing the hour of a man's death. (45) "*Quænam vita fuiſſet Priamo, ſi ab adoleſcentiu ſciſſet, quos eventus ſenectutis eſſet habiturus?*" By the difficulties which occur in the prophecies, God has furniſhed matter to occupy the talents of learned men, who would otherwiſe turn to other ſciences for intricacies whereon to try their parts. There is a great deal of true piety manifeſted in ſearching and comparing the ſcriptures, which could not be, if even the moſt arrogant and partial obſerver, could know as much as the man of ingenuous and ſober inveſtigation.

I hope that the reader is perſuaded now of there being ſufficient cauſe, why the Almighty ſhould at times veil his Providence in thick clouds, and make darkneſs his pavilion; and why he himſelf ſhould deſpiſe any malicious ſneers about the myſteriouſneſs of divine prophecy.

SECT. X.

THERE is no greater reſemblance between the ſcripture and Pagan oracles, than between a ſubſtance and its ſhadow; between ſterling coin and counterfeit. All that can be concluded from the Heathen oracles and divinations, is, that

(44) Sketches, &c. vol. 3. (45) Cicero de Div. Lib. 2.

that all mankind were perſuaded, that once there had been a communication between heaven and earth, which perſuaſion laid them open to ſeduction. Thus, of old it was uſual, when a man had written ſome celebrated works, for impoſtors to paſs off theirs, under the ſanction of his name. If he had never been the author of any genuine productions, we ſhould not have any ſpurious ones attributed to him. Inſtead, therefore, of an inference lying againſt prophecy from oracles, there is a ſtrong one in its favour.

It cannot be ſuppoſed, that princes and their miniſters would remain long without improving to their emolument, the biaſs which men had received in behalf of divine inſpiration. The Egyptians, who excelled all nations in political addreſs, were the foremoſt to lay hold on this advantage, and to propagate it by their colonies through the reſt of the world. Who would oppoſe what was to be a uſeful engine in the hands of kings, profitable to the prieſts, and grateful to the taſte of the people? The oracles flattered their paſſions, required no holineſs, nor correctneſs of manners. Among the Egyptians, their oracular books were kept by the prieſts only; they were not even written in the vulgar letter, but in a character peculiar to that order. Among the Romans, the oracular books were preſerved in the capitol by the *Quindecemviri*, could not be conſulted by any others under pain of death, nor even by themſelves, except by the expreſs commands of the ſenate, when there were ſeditions in the ſtate. Among the Jews, their oracular books were to be ſtudied by all; they were to meditate upon them, from the higheſt to the loweſt;

eſt; they were to write them on their door-poſts, on the hems of their garments, and to read them in their ſynagogues on the ſabbath days. If a Jew neglected the Old Teſtament, he had every thing to fear: if a Roman inſpected the Sibylline oracles, he had every thing to dread. Who does not ſee, that there is a moſt perfect diſſimilitude between theſe caſes? In the former, the books might ſpeak whatever the rulers pleaſed; in the latter, that was impoſſible; in the former, ſtate affairs were the ultimate object; in the latter, the worſhip and glory of God. Yet it is no uncommon thing to hear a Deiſt replying, when you ſpeak of the prophecies, "Oh! had not the Romans their prophecies alſo."

The oracular ſhrines will be found to be no leſs liable to ſuſpicion than the volumes. They could give no conſiſtent account of their firſt oracles. As it could not be ſuppoſed that the Divinity would fix his reſidence juſt where they pleaſed, they invented pretexts for building them on particular ſpots. Sometimes ſhepherds, ſometime pigeons, were the harbingers of the Deity; and the famed oracle of Delphos owed its riſe to the friſking of a goat. It has happened more than once, that a pretence even as ſpecious as this, was wanting for their erection. Alexander ſet up the oracle of Hephæſtion, when and where he liſted; in the ſame manner, the oracle of Auguſtus Cæſar was arbitrarily opened. In all theſe circumſtances, there appears no colour whatever for ſupernatural interpoſitions; but the ſtrongeſt traces of artifice and policy. Rulers had their authority ſtrengthened by the voice of the gods; and knew what deſigns were hatching

againſt

againſt their own or neighbouring ſtates, from the queſtions put to the oracle. The oracles were always devoted to the ruling powers. They ſanctioned the laws of Lycurgus, which permitted the murder of infants; they took part with Philip, pronounced Alexander invincible, and told Auguſtus, when he took Livia from her huſband, that nothing ſucceeded ſo well, as marrying a big-bellied woman. Compare this with the intrepidity of the Jewiſh prophets.

The marks of impoſture are not leſs ſtrong than thoſe of adulation. It was never pretended that any oracles were uttered out of the temples; yet if the prieſts were aſſiſted by inviſible powers, no reaſon can be aſſigned, why they ſhould not ſometimes give them in public. It ſeems as if they wanted a neceſſary apparatus. The caution which they uſed in imitating ſome, excluding others (1), and even in making away with ſuch as they thought had detected them, furniſhes more ground for diſtruſt. Thus, all the circumjacent people at Delphos, who muſt have been much about the oracle, were initiated in its myſteries, and ſo intereſted in keeping up the deluſion. The prieſts at Antioch deſired nothing ſo much as the excluſion of the Chriſtians who came prying about their ſhrines. It is much to our preſent purpoſe, that in Bæotia, a country proverbial for ſots and caverns, oracles abounded moſt. Vandale reckons up no leſs than two hundred and fifty in the Peloponeſus. Had our minute philoſophers lived in thoſe days, they muſt have contributed more to uphold this mummery, than they do at preſent, towards the viſible

(1) Van Dale de Oraculis, &c.

ſible worſhip of the one unoriginated God. There never was a well policed ſtate without an eſtabliſhed religion; and there never was a religion which coſt a ſtate or individuals leſs, than the Chriſtian; as will be evident to any man who conſiders the multiplicity of gods, temples, ſacrifices, prieſts, &c. in the times of old. But, it is not enough to be ſatisfied with preſumptions, when we have unequivocal proofs that the oracles were impoſitions. Euſebius ſhews, that many of the Pagan prieſts confeſſed this. In demoliſhing the Heathen temples at Alexandria, hollow ſtatues were found in the walls, from which anſwers had been returned. The ſtatues of Memnon, and of the Sphinxes, were excavated: it is eaſy to tell, therefore, who gave the oracles. Neither were the reſponſes uttered without much previous parade, as the ſounding of trumpets, ſtriking of cymbals, eating of laurel, overwhelming the inquirer with fragrance and ſmoke, ſo as to confound him. When the reſponſe was to be given in dreams, then the conſulter was obliged to prepare himſelf by a long courſe of purification and faſting; to lie in ſolitary caverns, wrapped in ſheep-ſkins, in which diſturbed ſtate of mind, it is natural to think he would dream, and imagine that he heard the voice of the gods, in voices coming augmented by tubes and arches. (2) All the well-atteſted wonders which were done, can be accounted for by mechaniſm, herbs, or chymical preparations. (3) The firſt pretenders to theſe arts, were ſuch as ſtudied phyſics and aſtrology; and their knowledge

(2) Van Dale de Oraculis, &c. (3) Farmer on Miracles.

knowledge of nature, enabling them to do ſome things above the reach of the vulgar, enabled them to paſs off other things. It is well known, that when their divinations failed, they ſaved their credit by pretending that ſome rite or ceremony was omitted. A perſon who ſhoots often at a mark, muſt ſometimes hit it, and therefore, it is not ſtrange if they were ſometimes right; particularly, when the reader conſiders that they were inquired of always when the events were going to take place; in which caſe, a ſagacious gueſs could go a great way. Yet even in theſe caſes, the oracles were ſo obſcure, as to admit of contrary meanings. If we had all the Pagan prophecies which were ever uttered ſet down in a book, as we have the Jewiſh and Chriſtian, it would be ſomething; but they come to us in ſuch a manner, as that all which fell out contrary might be kept out of the way, while ſuch as fell out right, might be ſounded abroad. There is another circumſtance relating to them, which deſerves particular notice. They are recorded by hiſtorians who lived after the completion of them; and therefore Cicero, ſpeaking of the famous oracle given to Crœſus, ſays, 'why ſhould I believe that theſe things were done?' Might not Herodotus, who was a foreigner, and who flouriſhed ſometime after Crœſus, have been impoſed upon in this, as he was in other relations? Or, might he not invent ſuch things of Crœſus, as Ennius did of Pyrrhus? Nor is greater reliance to be placed on the ſtory related by Juſtin of the Gauls, who were repelled by thunder, and the ghoſts of heroes, from the temple of Delphos. His narration is contradicted by

by many. (4) Strabo gives it as the opinion of ſome, that the temple was actually plundered by the Gauls, and that they were diſperſed by diſſenſions. Athenæus affirms that it was robbed. Callimachus, who lived near theſe times, ſays nothing of theſe wonders in his hymn of Delos, though he mentions the defeat of the Gauls; and as his deſign was to celebrate the praiſes of Apollo, he would not have omitted what would have aggrandized the god ſo highly. (5) Diodorus, in his account of this matter, ſays nothing of them; nay, Polybius relates (6) that the Etolians gloried in this; that *they* had repelled the Gauls. Juſtin, who is at beſt but a miſerable epitomiſt, is therefore not to be regarded. Vandale ſhews that we have good reaſon to doubt the ſtory of an oracle, pronouncing Socrates to be the wiſeſt of men. I have already given Cicero's opinion of the Sibylline verſes. (7) From the connected acroſtic manner in which they were written, he obſerved that they contained marks, *magis attenti animi, quam furentis.* They propheſied an eternal empire to the Romans; but where is it? It is true, that many of the fathers believed in them, and in divination in general, not being able to diveſt themſelves completely of Platonic prejudices. To each of them we might often obſerve, *fallit te incautum pietas tua,* or, we might ſay of them with Maldonatus (8), "*illâ nimirum ætate, nondum ſatis culta theologia, hujuſmodi aliquando ſpinas proferebat.*"

It is certain, that the whole of Heathen divinations, were derided by the wiſeſt among themſelves.

(4) Geog. l. 4. (5) Eclogæ, Lib. 22. (6) Lib. 9. (7) De Divin. Lib. 2. (8) Comment. in Math. Chap. 11.

ſelves. Demoſthenes thought that the Pithea could philippize. Cato wondered that two Augurs could meet without laughing at each other. When Julius Cæſar was informed that an oracle was unpropitious, he only ſaid, "*futura lætiora cum vellet.*" "You would rather truſt to a cow than to an old general," ſaid Hannibal to Pruſias, when he refuſed to fight, becauſe the entrails were unpropitious. The Epicureans, Peripatetics, and Cynics, to a man, deſpiſed, them. Euſebius is diſpoſed to treat them as impoſtures, in his fourth and fifth books *De Præp. Evan.*

Nothing has contributed more to ſupport the opinion of ſomething ſupernatural in oracles, than a notion that they were ſilenced by the advent of Jeſus Chriſt. But this is an unwarrantable miſtake. They were conſulted long after by Julian the apoſtate, and continued till Theodoſius ſuppreſſed all the Pagan ceremonies. It is certain, indeed, that, unable to bear the light of the Auguſtan age, the age in which Chriſtianity prevailed, they began to grow reſerved, though they were not altogether dumb, but ſpoke whenever there was room for impoſture. And here again there is a marked difference between the Jewiſh prophecies and thoſe of any other nation. For, from the return from Babylon, till the coming of Meſſiah, during a ſpace of four hundred and ninety years, they had no prophets at all; an hiatus which cannot be accounted for, if their oracles were frauds alſo.

Want of attention to the phraſeology of the Septuagint, has induced many to believe in the interference of ſpirits among the Pagans, from an opinion that it was countenanced in ſcrip-

ture. Our Engliſh verſion has contributed to ſtrengthen the deluſion, by confounding two things which are diſtinct. This verſion was made at a time when the doctrine of witchcraft and poſſeſſions was mightily prevalent, and under the patronage of a prince, deeply infected with theſe ſuperſtitions. The tranſlators have taken it for granted, that *demons* and *devils* were terms ſynonymous; whereas they convey very different ideas. *Devils* are angels, which loſt their firſt eſtate, probably by offending, when under a courſe of trial; but *demons* were ſuppoſed to be the ſpirits of deceaſed heroes, exalted to the rank of divinities, by Chaldaic ſuperſtition. The Devil, in the ſcripture ſenſe, was a being unknown to the Heathens. (9) *Diabolus* and *demon* are not once confounded, though the former occurs more than thirty times, and the latter about ſixty, in the New Teſtament; therefore, they can by no juſt rule of interpretation be rendered by the ſame term. The impropriety of rendering *demon* by *devil*, will appear by conſulting Acts, the 17th chapter, 18th verſe; it would run thus, "*He ſeemeth to be a ſetter forth of ſtrange devils.*" The Chaldean reveries about ſouls, and their tranſmigrations, were imported into Greece by the philoſophers who travelled, and from thence diſſeminated through the weſtern world. It became an univerſal dogma, that demons had once been the ſouls of men. (10) Socrates ſaid that demons were ſouls, who after ſpending their lives well, were tranſlated into a better ſtate. This doctrine is taught by Plato, and by Joſephus, who was infected with the Greek philoſophy. (11) Max-

(9) Campbell's Prelim. Diſſ. (10) Proclus de anima.

(11) Maximus Tyrius calls Minerva, who reſtrained the ſword of Achilles, a demon. (12) Euripides, (13) Plutarch, and the other ancients, teach the ſame doctrine. Proclus and Jamblichus alone diſlike the idea, from a wiſh, as I ſuppoſe, of exalting Platoniſm.

We have no reaſon, however, to believe that this doctrine of demons was known to the Iſraelites, at the time of the Exodus. (14) It is even probable, that it is not ſo ancient as that era. The charges given in the Pentateuch, are againſt *Saharim* and *Shedim*, i. e. againſt dead idols, figures of goats, and hairy creatures, which were uſed as ſymbols of the ſeveral parts of nature, (15) which the Heathens believed to have a power of divination. For when men began to worſhip the creature for the Creator, they alſo transferred his attributes to the creature. Now, as the firſt kind of idolatrous worſhip conſiſted in the adoration of the bodies in the univerſe, the power of inſpiration was aſcribed to them, before it was aſcribed to demons. There is no paſſage in the law or prophets, from which it could fairly be proved, that the falſe prophets were aſſiſted by demons; on the contrary, Jeremiah and Ezekiel ſay of them, "*That they ſpoke the viſion of their own hearts*; their gods are called *vanity*, *wind*, and *confuſion*, by Iſaiah, and are challenged to foretell any thing. Therefore, when Moſes and he ſpeak of *Saharim*, it ſhould not be rendered *demons*, (with the ſeptuagint tranſlators, who lived when the Chaldee doctrine

(11) Diſſertation 26. (12) In Hyppolito. (13) De Demone Socratis. (14) Shuckford's Con. vol. 2. (15) Cicero de Divin. lib. 2.

was prevalent, and had in a great meaſure ſupplanted theſe other opinions,) but *goats*. For inſtance, when he ſpeaks of the ruin of Babylon, he ſhould not be made to ſay, *Demons* will dance there; but *goats*, or hairy creatures, ſuch as the Egyptians adored. Many of the firſt verſions were made from the Septuagint, and by men tinctured with the doctrine of demons. Jerome was obliged to uſe ſuch maſters, and their dictionaries. As few of the primitive Chriſtians underſtood Hebrew, they were impoſed upon by perſons who forced the words: perſons who acted as the modern imitators of ancient ſatires, who give the original meaning a turn more agreeable to their own times.

As in the *old* diſpenſation, the prophets called the Pagan idols *gods*, and *lords*, (certainly not meaning that they were ſo in reality,) ſo in the *new*, the Apoſtles ſpeak of demons, not according to their own opinions, for they declare them to be nullities, but according to the opinions of their adverſaries. It is common to ſee all men reaſoning with others on their principles, if they can thereby draw a concluſion in their own favour; in which caſe, they are never bound to admit the truth of the premiſes. Again, when notions have been ſo long received, as at length to influence the language of a country, it is uſual with perſons who converſe with the inhabitants, to uſe the idiom of the place: indeed it is hardly poſſible to do otherwiſe, without inventing a new language, and ſo becoming unintelligible. For this reaſon, Chriſt and his Apoſtles ſpeak often of things, not as they are in themſelves, but as they were then conceived to be. It is thus he ſpeaks of an unclean ſpirit travelling through dry places.

It

(16) It is thus phyſicians ſpeak of the lunacy; materialiſts of the ſoul. It is thus we talk of St. Anthony's fire, night-mare, riſing and ſetting of the ſun; and it is thus the Apoſtles ſpeak of demons, and demoniacal poſſeſſions. But, as we would judge of the tenets of an aſtronomer, not from his common converſation, but when he delivers himſelf in a ſcientific manner, in the ſame way we ſhould judge of them. Now they ſay, "that an idol is nothing in the world;" but how could they aſſert this, if they believed it to be the repreſentation of a demon? All St. Paul's arguments for the nullity of idols, conclude only on the ſuppoſition of their ſtanding for demons, as otherwiſe he would have miſrepreſented the ſenſe of the Heathen, in not taking the word in the ſame meaning as they, for they never ſacrificed to the image merely. (17) Beſides, we have reaſon to think that the word *eidolon* often ſignifies a demon; for theſe two words are uſed as convertible terms in the ſeptuagint. *Eidolon* frequently means a ghoſt, or the form of a thing, not an idol. It ſhould be very deciſive on this head, that the whole of the Apoſtle's doctrine about ſpirits, is directly oppoſite to the doctrine of demons; for they aſſign to the ſouls of the dead, offices very different from thoſe aſcribed to demons, which, however, are ſuppoſed to be the ſouls of the departed. How can it be imagined, that Chriſt or his diſciples would realize beings, which are as much the creatures of the fancy, as ſatyrs, nymphs, or fauns? But it may be objected here, that they uſed the word demon in a Jewiſh ſenſe, meaning thereby a fallen angel. I am thoroughly perſuaded, that the Jews had no ſuch meaning annexed to the word; and that

(16) Farmer on Demoniacs. (17) Ibid.

that they conſidered the *prince of demons*, and the *prince of devils*, as diſtinct beings. This will be evident to him who reads the third chapter of St. Mark's Goſpel, in which it is ſaid, that when the Jews objected to Jeſus, that he caſt out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, he replied to them in a *parable*, "*Can Satan caſt out Satan?* Now, is not a parable an illuſtration of one truth by another? How then could this be a parable, if Satan and Beelzebub were conceived, either by him or them, to ſtand for the ſame being?

There is no foundation, therefore, either in reaſon or Scripture, for the power, or even exiſtence of demons. They are only mentioned, becauſe preconceived opinions had influenced the language in which the Apoſtles wrote; and it made no part of their commiſſion to alter language, or declare the natural cauſes of diſorders. Will any one ſay, that when the Greeks called a man *eudaimon*, or *kakodaimon*, they always thought he had a good or a bad demon about him? And why, then, ſhould he ſay that the Apoſtles thought ſo, when they ſay a man has a demon; particularly, as it has been ſhewn by Mr. Farmer, with great variety of learning, that *having a demon*, and *being mad*, are ſynonymous terms. The ſame perſon is called a *lunatic* by Matthew, and a *demoniac* by Luke. When the Jews ſaw John the Baptiſt melancholy, they ſaid, he hath a demon. The demoniacs of the goſpel have the ſame ſymptoms as madmen. From the inſtance of the herd of ſwine, it is evident, that it was only a diſorder that was transferred from the madman upon them; for it cannot be thought that evil ſpirits would, after aſking leave to enter the herd of ſwine, immediately drown them, i. e.

deſtroy

deſtroy their new quarters, the moment they got poſſeſſion of them. I have little doubt, but that the madmen really thought themſelves poſſeſſed, agreeable to the popular opinion; and their reaſoning right on theſe principles, is what chiefly ſerves to confound the incautious reader. Mr. Farmer has quoted a cloud of Greek authors to ſhew, that the doctrine of poſſeſſions, i. e. a belief that ſome diſeaſes were occaſioned by ſpirits, was long prior to the Chriſtian era; that the Jews were familiarized to the idea at the coming of Jeſus, and that the *energoumenoi* continued long after his time. (18) It was the gnoſtic philoſophy which taught that demons could hold ſouls under bodily oppreſſion.

The nullity of demons being eſtabliſhed, the nullity of oracles follows as a neceſſary conſequence, by the confeſſion of Maximus Tyrius.

SECT. XI.

ST. AUSTIN, diſputing againſt Fauſtus, the Manichean, thinks that our faith ſhould begin from the prophecies, as the tranſition is eaſy from thence to the miracles. This method is followed by the learned author of Ben Mordecai's Apology, who, in ſhewing the credibility of miracles of power, begins with prophecy, which is a miracle of knowledge. If God enabled Moſes and the Prophets, Chriſt and his Apoſtles, to foretell future events, (which nobody can deny, who has read the preceding ſections;) there is alſo a reaſonable confidence, that he enabled them to perform wonders, for the promotion of a beneficent end. Their miracles are, therefore, ſo circumſtanced, that there is a preſumption in their

(18) Moſheim's Ec. Hiſ. vol. 1.

their ſavour, even previous to the entering upon the proofs. But the proofs eſtabliſhing them are ſo irrefragable, that unbelievers, deſpairing of ſucceſs againſt the teſtimony, have endeavoured to ſhew, by a proceſs of argumentation, ſubverſive of common ſenſe, that a miracle is impoſſible; and cannot be fully proved by any teſtimony whatever. If a Chriſtian was obliged to advance ſuch a paradox in defence of his religion, I well conceive with what loud deriſion and indignant ſcorn it would be received; what jeſts would be played off againſt the argument and cauſe, which require ſuch an one.

In the theological ſenſe, a miracle is an effect above human or natural power, performed by God, in atteſtation of ſome truth. Now, it will hardly be aſſerted, that a miracle is impoſſible, merely becauſe of the ſtrangeneſs of the thing, ſince the growth of corn from the earth, and its changing afterwards into fleſh in the human body, is in itſelf, as great a wonder, as that a few loaves ſhould, in our Saviour's hands, grow to the ſuſtenance of a multitude. If we were equally familiarized to both ſights, the one would excite as little aſtoniſhment as the other.

Neither will a true theiſt affirm that miracles are impoſſible, from the immutability of God, as this is an atheiſtical objection, founded merely on an Atheiſt's definition of God, as being a great neceſſary active Power in nature, without choice or intelligence. But a Deiſt cannot, on his principles, entertain ſuch unworthy notions of the Deity, as to ſubject him to the fate of the Stoics. To give this argument any force, the laws of nature muſt be conſidered as independent of the will of God; or it muſt be ſaid, that having power to make them, he has no power to change

change them; which, rational theiſm would pronounce to be blaſphemy. This argument would alſo prove too much. It would prove that God never created any thing in time, and then the unanſwerable arguments againſt the world's eternity take place; and it would prove that no new phenomenon was ever manifeſted ſince the beginning, which is contrary to fact. For inſtance, the earth itſelf, and the hiſtory of all nations, bear unvarying teſtimony to a deluge, which by this hypotheſis, could never begin to be, or if coeval with the world, could never ceaſe to be. In ſhort, the myriads of reaſons which overthrow atheiſm, equally overthrow this immutability, this ſuppoſition, that God cannot alter the courſe of nature.

If it be ſaid, that though God *could*, yet he *would* not act in this manner; then let it be conſidered, upon what foundation this is aſſerted. The moſt plauſible ſeems to be, that it would derogate from his attributes, and wear the aſpect of caprice. But this is plainly founded on miſconception; for it argues no capriciouſneſs, but wiſdom, to change with circumſtances. He is indeed, unchangeable in himſelf; but his ſubjects are not ſo. (1) Though he at firſt eſtabliſhed ſuch an order of things as was worthy of his wiſdom, yet he made men free and rational agents; the neceſſary reſult of which is, that men were capable of darkening, and neglecting, as well as of improving, and exerciſing their reaſon: (2) and, therefore, as they were created liable to ſin, He in his goodneſs, might recall ſinners to a ſenſe of their duty, by ſigns and wonders.

(1) Foſter againſt Tindal. (2) Hay's Religio Philoſophi.

wonders. Now, how could this be called caprice, when it was a ſteady purſuance of the original end for which God formed the world, and the laws of nature, i. e. for the advantage of moral agents? For is it not as utterly irrational to think, that he formed a brute inert maſs for itſelf, and not for its inhabitants; as that a wiſe man would build an houſe, without intending it for a dwelling-place? As then the creation and its laws were for the uſe of moral agents, ſo would the changes be; they would work to the ſame end, and conſequently, be as ſuitable as the courſe of nature. Wherefore, theſe changes, inſtead of ſhewing that God is mutable, really ſhew that he is immutable; becauſe they ſhew, that he ſteadily purſued the original deſign, for which he formed the univerſe, i. e. that men ſhould know, honour, and obey him; which duties theſe variations tend to promote. When they made a part of his original ſcheme of things, they were a fulfilment of his plan, inſtead of being a deviation from it. When God wrought miracles, he acted like a legiſlator, ſuſpending his ordinary laws for wiſe reaſons.

To prove the poſſibility of miracles, it is only requiſite to ſhew that God has power and intelligence (3), which he muſt have unlimitedly, theſe being excluded from his nature neither neceſſarily or contingently; ſo that we are not obliged to wait for experience, that we may know what God can do; becauſe we are aſſured *a priori*, that his power can extend to every thing poſſible. Moreover, if there be no neceſſary connexion between cauſe and effect, and if

(3) Hamilton on the Attrib.

if you ſuppoſe, as a Theiſt muſt, that the ſeries of things is regulated by the Deity, then it muſt be owing to an arbitrary deciſion, that any cauſe conſtantly produces the ſame effect; and, therefore, the being upon whom this depended, might decide otherwiſe when he pleaſed. The great error or artifice of unbelievers, with reſpect to this argument, lies in their confounding phyſical and metaphyſical neceſſity; the former of which is founded only on moral neceſſity, i. e. on the free choice of God; whereas, the latter is built on eternal verities, the oppoſite of any of which would imply a contradiction.

Now, whatever is poſſible might be. If, then, a miraculous fact did happen, why is it to gain no credit? Becauſe ſtrange and uncommon? But was not the great plague at Athens, with its concomitant circumſtances, ſtrange and uncommon? Was not the ſweating-ſickneſs uncommon? There is as entire an argument againſt it from experience, as can poſſibly be imagined: it never happened in the common courſe of nature before. What could be more contradictory to firm and unalterable experience in the economy of animal life, than the hiſtory of the polypus, which by late diſcoveries, has been found to triple itſelf, inſtead of being killed, if cut into three pieces? A man bearing teſtimony to this fact, before one who had learned Hume's Rules of Reaſoning, would receive for anſwer, "Whether is it more improbable that you ſhould deceive, or be deceived; or that what is contrary to my perſonal and all paſt experience on animal economy, ſhould be true?" Yet here this *redoubtable* argument would fail without controverſy; and, therefore,

a man

a man by following it, is in danger of rejecting truths. If it ſhould be ſaid, that this example was *beſide*, not *contrary* to experience, (which is the uſual ſhift on theſe occaſions, and by which they would mean, that men had not made ſufficient experiments on the polypus formerly, ſo as to know that it poſſeſſed theſe properties,) this argument will recoil againſt its author, as no man can preſume to ſay, that he has ſuch experience of the nature of God, as to be able to tell when his operations ſhall be bounded, and when not. The caſe of the polypus, is a much ſtronger caſe than that of miracles, which are not contrary to paſt experience, if we are to give credit to hiſtory, from which it is learned. Hume, indeed, takes it for granted, that they are, and ſo he begs the queſtion; though he inconſiſtently and falſely ſays, "that all religions were founded on them," i. e. we have univerſal teſtimony for them, and univerſal experience againſt them, according to this author. Even ſuppoſing univerſal experience to be againſt them, that would be immaterial in the preſent inquiry. Experience is only a negative evidence, and can at any time be overturned by a poſitive teſtimony. I may ſay in his own words, that paſt experience may be allowed, to give direct and certain information of theſe preciſe objects only, and of that preciſe period of time which fell under its cognizance; and therefore, it is no proper proof that the future will reſemble the paſt; it is only a preſumption; ſo that when it claſhes with teſtimony, it is nonſenſe to ſay with Hume, there is proof againſt proof. He allows that experience deceives ſometimes; but that it *commonly* informs us beforehand of the uncertainty,

uncertainty, by that contrariety of events which we may learn from a diligent obſervation. May we not by this account, give credit to an event happening contrary to experience? Laſtly, let us conſider from what experience ariſeth. It is formed from obſervations made on the courſe of nature, for a ſeries of years. Now, I ſhould be glad to know, from the abettors of his ſyſtem, how many years are neceſſary to form this experience, which is to be called uniform, and which is to be conſidered as a proof againſt any event ſaid to contradict it from that time forth. When he has fixed upon that period, I ſhould then wiſh to know, upon what principle that preciſe time is choſen; and why if an event happened a month or a year after, there ſhould be an entire proof againſt it from experience; whereas, if it had happened a month or a year ſooner, there would be a proof for it from experience. It would be hard to perſuade a reaſoning ingenuous mind, that after believing on teſtimony, in the unexampled qualities of theſe inert bodies which produce gunpowder, and which he handled every day, he was yet to reject proper teſtimony for ſome unprecedented actions of a free and mighty Agent, with whoſe attributes he was but imperfectly acquainted. Mr. Hume himſelf would ſtrengthen his prejudices againſt ſo unfair a requiſition; for he allows, that the Deity may be endowed with attributes which we never ſaw exerted; and mentions it in one place (4) as an abſurdity, to ſuppoſe that Nature is as much bounded in her operations, as we are in our ſpeculations; ſo impoſſible

(4) Eſſay 18.

poſſible is it for any man to preſerve conſiſtence, when he is at variance with firſt principles, and erects for himſelf a tribunal above the throne of God. He would allow his analogical argument to be an abſurd one, except when it is uſed againſt religion. His reaſonings are partial in a ſurprizing degree. He owns that miracles muſt exceed the capacity of human nature, otherwiſe, they could not be employed as an argument for a divine miſſion; yet their being above that capacity, is the reaſon why he rejects them; i. e. he rejects them for having the characteriſtics which he himſelf thought indiſpenſable. We may ſay of this writer in the words of Cicero (5). " *Sed neſcio quomodo, nihil tam abſurde dici poteſt, quod non dicatur ab aliquo philoſophorum.* Indeed, his principles tend to atheiſm, and are almoſt as abhorrent from the doctrines of pure deiſm, as from Chriſtianity.

It is recorded in honour of Pythagoras (6), that he exhorted his diſciples not to be incredulous about wonderful actions aſcribed to the gods, becauſe they were omnipotent. It is, however, a maxim univerſally allowed of, that God does nothing in vain; ſo that whenſoever he wrought miracles, we may reſt aſſured, they were to anſwer ſome important ends. From this axiom, a prejudice ariſeth againſt all unmeaning wonders, for the performance of which, no ſufficient cauſe could be ſhewn; whereas, if by their means valuable purpoſes were attainable, a prejudice ariſeth in their favour. But as we have already proved, that a revelation from God

(5) De Divin. lib. 2. (6) Jamblichus de Vit. Pythago.

God would be attended with ineſtimable benefits; ſo would the miracles which gave it its efficacy, and ſtamped divinity upon it? For, without miracles, no one could convince reaſonable perſons that his doctrine deſcended from above. No wiſe man would put up with mere violent aſſertions, in a caſe of this nature, becauſe then it would be impoſſible to guard againſt enthuſiaſm or deceit, which might make aſſertions equally violent. So that if God ever did make a diſcovery of his will by a Prophet, it was abſolutely neceſſary that the Prophet ſhould perform wonders; there being no other way of perſuading men, that he manifeſted the will of God. But if that God, who holds the reins of nature, ſhould, by his inſtrumentality alter its courſe, it is an abſolute and deciſive proof, that he has commiſſioned him; and ſo he removes the improbability, that the man had a ſupernatural communication. From hence it follows, that if it be probable *a priori*, that God would reveal his will, a miracle cannot be a thing improbable *a priori*, as it is a neceſſary appendage to a revelation. Beſides that miracles ſhew the finger of God, who alone can control his own laws; they have a peculiar aptneſs in their nature, to anſwer the end for which they were deſigned. They are a ſort of proof, level to the capacities of all men; whereas, if a ſyſtem of deiſm was publiſhed, it is obvious that its authority muſt depend on pure abſtract reaſoning, which the bulk of mankind could not comprehend; but facts are adapted to all underſtandings. Metaphyſical demonſtrations are very true, yet often very abſtruſe; but the moſt rude are judges in this caſe. Thus, twelve ordinary

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men can ſerve very well on a jury. They are alſo fitted to make a deeper impreſſion than dry ratiocination; ſo that if a doctrine was even ſuch as reaſon could produce, they would ſtill be ſerviceable to awaken attention. Neither are they compulſory on the will. Men are left at liberty to turn their minds to, or from ſuch an evidence, juſt as they pleaſe. All merit conſiſts in this freedom of thought and action; otherwiſe, a man is no more anſwerable for his religious opinions, than for being tall or low.

It has been pompouſly demanded, where is the neceſſary connexion between miracles and a doctrine? But we have already ſhewn, that miracles declare his divine miſſion who delivers the doctrine. (7) There is no neceſſary connexion between words and ideas, between bargains and a ſeal; yet no perſon on that account objects to their uſe. Even the pantheiſtic Spinoza thought this cavil of no avail (8); he would have broken his ſyſtem in pieces, if he could have believed in the reſurrection of Lazarus.

Having now ſhewn the poſſibility and great uſefulneſs of miracles, it follows, that there is not half ſo ſtrong a preſumption againſt the works of Chriſt, before you have entered upon the proofs ſupporting them, as there is againſt the unprecedented atchievements of Alexander, before you have examined the evidences in their behalf; and that conſidering miracles abſtractedly, they are not more improbable than electricity or magnetiſm; but they never ſhould be conſidered ſtripped of their ends and circumſtances.

(7) Conybeare ag. Tindal. (8) Bayle's Dict. Article Spinoza.

ſtances. This preſumption in their favour is ſtrengthened exceedingly by a phenomenon which takes place in the ſyſtem of the univerſe. It is an obſervation of aſtronomers, that the planets affect each other in their courſes, and are retarded by mutual gravitation. This would, in the lapſe of time, diminiſh the quantity of planetary motion; but as this conſequence does not follow, the inference is, that the Author of Nature has interpoſed, and rectified theſe irregularities. Now here is a miracle wrought in the natural world, which was called into exiſtence only for the ſake of the moral. Is it not probable, then, that he has equally interpoſed for the moral?

In things mathematical, demonſtration is the proof; in things ſenſible, ſenſe; in matters of fact, teſtimony and records. Upon theſe, the truth of all paſt tranſactions depend, as neither the evidence of ſenſe, or the evidence of abſtract truths, can poſſibly be applied to them. I have already ſhewn, that the records which contain the miraculous actions of Moſes, and Jeſus Chriſt, are coeval with the age in which they were ſaid to be done. Thoſe two perſons, then, claimed that power even from the commencement of their miniſtry, and are the only lawgivers, who, ſince the foundation of the world, built their laws on ſuch facts. My Lord Bolingbroke himſelf has the candour to confeſs, that the miracles related in the Pentateuch are not facts diſunited from the civil hiſtory, like the miracles of Titus Livy; but that they are interwoven with, and inſeparable from it: therefore, Moſes made miracles, ſaid to be performed before the congregation, the ground-work of his whole ſuperſtructure.

(9) There was ſcarce a miracle which he profeſſed to work, which had not upwards of one million of witneſſes to judge of its genuineneſs. He writes of them without art; ſpeaks of them with a ſimplicity nothing doubting; takes the people as witneſſes of their truth; and reproaches them bitterly for diſobedience, after having ſeen ſuch things. He has no recourſe to old hiſtories of what was done; and, by means of his miracles, prerogatives were given to ſome, and ſtigmas inflicted upon others. They were not only of a tranſient, but ſome of them were of a permanent nature. However, I have entered into this point above, and ſhewn, that circumſtanced as Moſes and the Iſraelites were, ſuch laws could never have been impoſed upon them, or thought of by him, if he was conſidered merely as an ordinary Legiſlator.

In like manner, the common facts related in the New Teſtament, are unaccountable, unleſs you admit the miraculous. The ſteady adherence of the diſciples of Jeſus, the multitudes which followed him, and the hatred of the Jews, are incredible on any other hypotheſis. There is no other part of his conduct, which could furniſh a ſufficient cauſe for theſe effects. Other men have drawn people after them, but then, you ſee ſome reaſon for it in their hiſtory. Thus, Barchochebas promiſed to reſtore the Jews to their country; but Jeſus promiſed tribulation in the world: Mahomet led on his followers to the ſpoil; but the followers of Jeſus were, like himſelf, to yield up their backs to the ſmiters. From theſe internal circumſtances, which cannot

(9) Hay's Relig. Philoſ.

not be controverted, it appears that Jeſus wrought wonders.

This is ſtill farther evident, from his founding his divine legation upon them. He would have himſelf believed upon, for the works ſake which he profeſſed to do openly before all men. He ſent out his diſciples with a commiſſion, to preach and work miracles. Now, if he knew his inability to perform theſe promiſes, then how does this ridiculous pretenſion, which every body could confute, and which ſtruck at the root of his whole ſcheme, agree with that profound wiſdom ſo univerſally aſcribed to him? Or how comes it that he made ſo many converts, when he profeſſed to apply no other motive for believing on him, and yet could never apply it at all? Theſe two queſtions may be replied to; but I am ſure they can never be anſwered. If, indeed, he had only affirmed that he had a divine commiſſion, and ſo taught a ſet of opinions, he might have had admirers; but when a man builds all on facts, there is nothing in this calm appeal to the ſenſes, which can ſtir up the mind to enthuſiaſm: no man would believe them, unleſs he ſaw them, or had them properly atteſted. Many men, by a frantic and vehement action, have argued a few followers into a belief, that they were ſome great perſonages; but a cold and formal avowal of public miracles could never do this; on the contrary, the pretender would excite univerſal deriſion and contempt, when unable to fulfil his engagements. Therefore, Mahomet prudently enough profeſſed, that he never had the power of working miracles. (10) No

(10) Campbell on Miracles.

Deiſt will ſay, that it was honeſty which made him diſclaim them; if he could have counterfeited them, they would have been of great uſe; for they were often called for, as we learn from the Koran. No: but he knew that he could not deceive the people herein, though they were barbarous; he knew that it was one thing to impoſe upon men's intellects, and another thing to impoſe upon their ſenſes. Not one of the ancient Pagan legiſlators ever claimed ſuch a power; conſcious that it was too bold a challenge. Few enthuſiaſts ever pretended to them; and ſuch as did, ruined themſelves thereby. (11) A church, by laying claim to them, converted one half of her ſons to another religion, and thouſands to infidelity. (12) When the Janſeniſts called in pretended miracles to their aid, it prejudiced their cauſe exceedingly. Such as might ſlight the learned authority of Moſheim, will reſpect Voltaire when he ſays, that "the grave of Abbé Paris was the grave of Janſeniſm:" juſt ſo would the grave of Jeſus Chriſt have been the grave of Chriſtianity, had his pretenſions been as groundleſs as theirs.

I have already proved, that the Apoſtles bore their teſtimony in writing, to theſe miracles, in the very age, and on the very ſpot on which they were ſaid to be performed. They do not write in Judea, of tranſactions in India, but of matters performed in the place, and at the time when they, who were ſaid to have been once dead, diſeaſed, blind, and dumb, were walking about whole. The very recording of the miracles under theſe circumſtances, is a proof that they

(11) Watſon's Apol. (12) Moſheim's Ec. Hiſ. vol. 4.

they were wrought: for I ſuppoſe that it will be allowed, that the Evangeliſts wiſhed to have their hiſtory generally believed in. But if what they ſaid was falſe, the facts and doctrines grounded on them would gain no credit at all. For inſtance, would any man turn Chriſtian, at the hazard of his life, if the vail of the temple's being rent in twain, and a darkneſs overſpreading Judea at the death of Jeſus, were mentioned as cauſes why he ſhould act in that manner? He muſt know that theſe were notorious falſehoods. The writers of the New Teſtament give every poſſible room for detection. They do not ſay in general, that our Saviour wrought miracles. They deſcend into the particulars. Thus, John ſpeaks of Bethany, Lazarus's place of abode; of his two ſiſters, Martha and Mary; of many looking on at his reſurrection; ſo that it would be eaſy to go to the village, and inquire the truth of what was ſet down. They ſpeak of prieſts, magiſtrates, and private men, who were preſent at the facts: they ſpecify their names, and the names of the perſons cured; as blind Bartimeus, &c. In the ſecond chapter of the Acts, there is a public appeal about the miracles. Peter, in his firſt addreſs to the Jews, lays them and the prophecies as the foundations on which they ſhould build their faith. St. Luke ſays, that "when the gift of tongues was conferred, there were devout men from every nation under Heaven at Jeruſalem, attending the feaſt." As the year was known, people in all parts of the empire could aſſure themſelves whether this was falſe; and if ſo, who would embrace the goſpel? Let a Deiſt maturely conſider this, that the miracles were recorded in the Apoſtolic

Apoſtolic age, and perhaps he may think his ſyſtem more exceptionable than he imagined. For, if the goſpel hiſtory be falſe, as he ſuppoſes it to be, then it is all ſtuffed with open palpable lies; yet this got multitudes of converts at that very period, who muſt have known them to be falſehoods; and yet they acted as if they thought them true, and hazarded their lives and properties upon them. Therefore, the very circumſtance of recording them in ſuch a caſe, is a proof that they were wrought.

The belief and teſtimony of the writers is another proof. The greateſt evidence which can be given to a matter of fact, is, when perſons who were eye-witneſſes to it, atteſt it; when the matters to which they bear their witneſs, are what they might clearly and eaſily perceive; when many witneſſes concur in the ſame teſtimony; when the witneſſes are ſo well convinced of the truth, as to part with their worldly ſubſtance and all their comforts. Theſe requiſites belong to the Apoſtles, who were the companions of Jeſus, as all agree, and conſequently were qualified to judge of his actions. There are no other hiſtorians ſo worthy of credit; not even Xenophon in his Anabaſis; Cæſar, in his Commentaries; or Thucydides, in his Sicilian war: for let a man examine every motive and ſpring, by which human nature is liable to be influenced, and he will not be able to find one intereſted view which the Apoſtles could have, in bearing their teſtimony; as I intend to ſhew at large hereafter. (13) We believe other hiſtorians, who could have no aſſurance of what they ſay,

(13) Blackall's 4 Serm. Boyle's Lect.

ſay, like the Evangeliſts, who tell of things of which they had no perſonal knowledge; of things done in countries far remote, in times long before their own, into the truth of which, their readers had no means to inquire; of things done in ſecret, which if falſe, no one had worldly intereſt to diſprove: why then will men refuſe to give credit to the Evangeliſts? Certainly, they do not act from reaſon, but from prejudice. There is the ſame ground, at leaſt, for the certainty of miracles, that there is for the certainty of any ancient facts; and what can be more unfair, than to allow the ſame evidence to be ſufficient in one caſe, and to deny its ſufficiency in another; more eſpecially, as we have ſhewn that there is a preſumption *a priori*, in favour of the miracles of ſcripture? I well know the fooliſh anſwer by which ſome endeavour to juſtify this inconſiſtent behaviour, viz. that many facts in the goſpel are miraculous. But every man muſt ſee that this pretext, when examined to the bottom, does not by any means reconcile their conduct. For it is obvious, that the difference in the cauſe of a miraculous and ordinary fact, makes no difference at all as to the certainty of the fact itſelf. For inſtance, if the ſun was miraculouſly retarded in his courſe, ſo as not to go down for four days, could not men be as well aſſured of that fact, as if he went down in twelve hours? It appears, therefore, that when they make the miraculouſneſs of facts an excuſe for unbelief, it is juſt no excuſe at all. (14) Mr. Gibbon grants, that three witneſſes are ſufficient to prove a miraculous fact.

Another

(14) Decline, &c. vol. 2.

Another anſwer uſually made by Infidels to evade this, is very curious. They ſay that thoſe vouchers are Chriſtians, and therefore, not to be credited: i. e. men educated in Jewiſh or Pagan religions, who, by the evidence of the facts, were prevailed on to abandon the inſtitutions of their countries, are not to be depended upon; whereas, in any other caſe, this would make them be looked upon as the beſt witneſſes poſſible. In ſhort, if one man bears teſtimony to the miracles, ſtill continuing in his former perſuaſion, thoſe reaſoners ſay that he is not to be believed, becauſe he was not converted; if another be converted, and bears his teſtimony, then he is not to be believed, becauſe he is a Chriſtian and a party; ſo that if a writer does not mention them at all, it is an argument againſt them; if he mentions them without believing, it is no argument for them; and if he mentions them and believes, his teſtimony is not to be taken. Again, if the facts advanced in proof of a divine revelation, can be accounted for in a natural way, then they are no proof; if they cannot, then their being miraculous, is a reaſon for rejecting them. Surely, nothing but a rage for ſingularity, or a deſire of calming a troubled conſcience, could give weight to ſuch a manner of arguing in the minds of any.

Another proof that miracles were wrought, ariſes from this, that they are oppoſed by no contradictory teſtimony of contemporaries, but inſtead thereof, are always admitted; for we have the ſubſtance of the firſt books written againſt the faith, in the anſwers of the Chriſtians, and given too in a manner not liable to miſrepreſentation, becauſe the objections are ſet down

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at length, in the very words of their adverſaries. To be convinced of this, look at Cyril's Books againſt Julian. It is very obvious, that both Jews and Pagans would not have omitted to publiſh the falſehood of ſuch miraculous pretenſions, while thouſands were able, and very well inclined to diſprove them. For if he did them by colluſion, it would be miraculous indeed, if none of thoſe who muſt have been in the ſecret, could have been lured by bribes to make a diſcovery. This muſt be the more wonderful on a Deiſt's ſcheme, who, moſt probably believes, that the hope of gain firſt induced them to engage in ſuch a project. The covetous Judas, who betrayed his maſter, would have no regard for his reputation; nay, he was bound to blacken it, to juſtify himſelf; but inſtead thereof, he hanged himſelf through remorſe. This would have been a leſs troubleſome, and a leſs cruel method, than the fiery perſecutions which aroſe from the very beginning among the Jews, and immediately afterwards among the Romans, when the Chriſtians grew numerous enough to attract their attention. But they did nothing of this nature; they all endeavoured to cut aſunder the knot, which they were unable to untie. This ſhews that it was not from heedleſſneſs or contempt, that they abſtained from confuting the narrative of Chriſt's miracles. No—many were irritated againſt him from the very outſet of his miniſtry; becauſe, it appears from the goſpels, that he threw out reflections againſt ſome wicked individuals of rank, and againſt ſome bodies of men, which, doubtleſs, raiſed reſentments in them, and a vehement deſire to convict him of impoſture. Nothing but a conſciouſneſs

ſciouſneſs of their inability, could inſtigate the ſhrewd politicians of that age, to prefer a ſanguinary proceſs before the gentle and familiar expedient of counteracting the claims, if falſe, by unexceptionable contrary teſtimony.

The converſion of the world to Chriſtianity, is another ſignal proof that miracles were wrought. The eſtabliſhment of that religion is an event, anſwerable to the miracles performed in atteſtation of it; otherwiſe, it would be totally unaccountable. Many able men have proved, that the ſecondary cauſes aſſigned by Gibbon, are utterly inadequate. Indeed, any indifferent reader can ſee, that the queſtion ſtill recurs in each of his cauſes; for when he ſpeaks of the zeal of the Chriſtians as a cauſe, the queſtion is, "What inſpired them with that zeal?" When he ſpeaks of the offer of the immortality of the ſoul illuring numbers, then the queſtion is, "What made the world believe Jewiſh fiſhermen, rather than the moſt renowned philoſophers, who taught the ſame doctrine, but with little ſucceſs?" For this was not a new dogma, but one inculcated from a time to which the memory of man runneth not. If the ſages of ancient days, who traverſed the earth in purſuit of knowlege, who were tutors of monarchs, and idols of the people, made ſuch ſlow advances in gaining proſelytes, what ought we to have expected from the poor and illiterate Galileans, who had no powerful patrons, and who, by the deiſtical hypotheſis, had no requiſite whatever for this arduous taſk? Yet, as the rapid progreſs of the Diſciples, and the unſucceſsfulneſs of the philoſophers, is a fact indiſputable, we muſt conclude, that the latter had only bare promiſes to offer,

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the former manifeſt tokens of a divine miſſion. (15) If the Apoſtles wrought no miracles, they muſt have changed men's religious principles, merely by the power of perſuaſion; but how could they have learned the languages of all nations for this purpoſe, or convince by reaſoning ſo many of the vulgar, contrary to their prejudices, paſſions, and intereſts? Nothing can be a greater proof that miracles were wrought than this, that ſuch multitudes of the vulgar believed: for by arguing, it is very difficult to beat them out of old notions; but if life and property were endangered by the change, it would be impoſſible. Beſides, the pomp of Pagan temples and religions was very alluring to the vulgar.

Suppoſe an Apoſtle to come to a city, and even ſuppoſe him to be perfectly acquainted with their language; in the firſt place, it is not eaſy to conceive how a poor unconnected man, if he differed in nothing from an ordinary perſon, could get any to liſten to his diſcourſe. In the next place, it is utterly improbable, that the Heathens of Greece or Aſia would give any credit at their peril, to his teſtimony, unleſs they had ſeen him work miracles among themſelves, when he would ſet forth a wonderful relation of things done in a foreign ſuperſtitious region, and that the Jeſus whom he preached was ſet at naught, and crucified by his own countrymen. The Jeſuit miſſionaries were, by their own confeſſion, obliged to indulge Pagan converts in idolatrous ceremonies, and yet the work of converſion went on ſlowly, though they were men of learning; though their ſyſtem approximated more nearly to that

(17) M'Night's Converſion, &c.

that eſtabliſhed, than the ſyſtem of the Apoſtles; though they could aſſure the Heathens, that many inquiſitive nations had received their faith; and though they were cheriſhed by the potentates of theſe parts, for their ſkill in the ſciences. Monteſquieu ſays, that, humanly ſpeaking, "Chriſtianity cannot be eſtabliſhed in the eaſt, as it would overſet their manners and cuſtoms." How came it, then, to gain ſuch an eſtabliſhment there in the firſt and ſecond centuries? For it is undeniable, that many Jews and eaſtern Gentiles, notwithſtanding the ſtrong diſſuaſives which they had from prejudices of education, the importunities of criminal paſſions, and the blandiſhments of the world, forſook all for Jeſus Chriſt. The reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity would never proſelyte the world, ſo as to make them endure perſecution: its reaſonableneſs would be an objection to thoſe who loved fornication, drunkenneſs, &c. (16) It cannot be ſaid, that credulity influenced them to believe the miracles; for though a man may liſten to any pretended miracle, in ſupport of a faith which he has once embraced, in that proportion, he will be incredulous to believe a miracle in ſupport of one, which he has not embraced; which was the caſe with all thoſe who at firſt became Chriſtians.

The length of time in which the miracles were ſaid to be wrought, at leaſt till the death of John, prevents impoſture. They are not ſaid to be confined to one ſpot, but the ſcenes of them are laid in moſt of the great cities throughout the empire. (17) The account of them is not ſet down in the obſcure language of an obſcure people,

(16) Campbell on Mir. (17) Lardner's Cred. vol. 1.

people, but in that of the moſt numerous, moſt learned, and moſt polite people in the whole world. The Apoſtles ſpread themſelves, and did not keep in a body, as a band of confederated men muſt have done. On this plan, no unity of cunning deſign could have ſubſiſted; for how could they have a party in the cities where they firſt preached, in Antioch, Athens, Rome, Corinth? (18) In ſhort, let us ſuppoſe that the miracles were not true, then thouſands of the ſame age and the ſame country with the Apoſtles, prejudiced by intereſt and education againſt a doctrine, were perſuaded into a firm belief of it from miracles, (for it is built on them) were perſuaded, that they had ſeen diſeaſes healed, while all this time, they had never ſeen any ſuch thing; and it is extraordinary, that this belief, inſtead of loſing its credit when the firſt guſt was over, ſhould go on encreaſing, till it conquered the conquerors of the world. Yet the vicious would not receive this religion, if it were a lie; and the good would not receive it, as deteſting the horrible forgery; ſo that no one would receive it on the ſcheme of infidelity. Here is an effect without a cauſe, a much greater miracle than any recorded in the ſcripture. For ſo many being deceived, is as contrary to the laws of the moral world, as any miracle of the goſpel is to the laws of the phyſical. There would be a prodigy in one caſe, as well as in the other; but it is impoſſible that God would reverſe the order of ſociety, to impoſe a fraud; whereas, that he would ſuffer the order of the natural world to be changed, to atteſt the miſſion of a prophet,

(18) Chapman's Euſeb.

prophet, is highly conſonant with his gracious nature.

I do not ſee how the gift of tongues, that ſtanding miracle of the primitive church, can be called in queſtion. (19) About ſixty years after the Apoſtles had diſperſed themſelves to preach, the temples of the Heathen deities were left deſolate. To ſay that this could be effected without a knowledge of languages, is nonſenſe; and to ſay that Jewiſh fiſhermen could learn ſo many tongues amidſt their other avocations, is at leaſt improbable. But what leaves the mind no room to doubt in the exiſtence of the gift of tongues, is, that the Apoſtolic writers appeal to theſe gifts, and argue from them in their writings to the firſt Chriſtians. It is too ridiculous to ſay, that they would lay ſo much ſtreſs on a gift, which they muſt know, that neither they, or the perſons addreſſed by them poſſeſſed. If, indeed, they had complimented the churches for a gift, which they had not, there is a bare poſſibility, that they would paſs it by unnoticed. But this is not the caſe. The churches are cenſured ſharply for abuſing theſe gifts. St. Paul argues on the ſtrength of them, againſt the Judaiſing Chriſtians, and aſks them, 'whether it was owing to the law, or the hearing of faith, that theſe were conferred.' He gives directions for the management of them, to edify the church the more. All this is done in his letters to the Corinthians, among whom he had many inſidious enemies, ready to avail themſelves of whatever he might ſay. It is remarkable enough, that he is arguing againſt a falſe Apoſtle, when he boaſts of his gifts.

(19) Pliny's Epiſt. 97.

gifts. Now, could it enter into the mind of any man, to expatiate ſo largely about nullities, or to believe that he could make a ſingle convert by adopting a conduct ſo unaccountable? No Deiſt will think thus of St. Paul. I never knew a perſon, who conſidered this witneſſing of the ſpirit deliberately, who did not allow, that it was an exceeding ſtrong argument for the miracles of the goſpel.

Neither is it eaſy to perceive how the miracle of the reſurrection can be denied. This, Jeſus Chriſt foretold, and always laid great ſtreſs upon it. Suppoſing him an impoſtor, it is a moſt unlikely thing, that he would put his religion in danger of vaniſhing in three days after his death, by being found a lying deceiver. He would not reſt its truth on ſo plain a matter of fact, but on ſome other thing, which could not be ſo eaſily diſproved. That the Jewiſh rulers knew of this prediction, appears from their ſealing the ſepulchre, and ſetting a watch. But if an unbeliever ſhould object here, that we learn theſe facts relating to the reſurrection, chiefly from the teſtimony of Matthew, &c. Then let us ſuppoſe the contrary, that Chriſt never foretold his death; that the rulers never ſealed the ſtone; that they ſet no guard; that the ſoldiers never gave out that he was ſtolen away; that there was no uproar at Jeruſalem. What conſequence follows? Why, this palpable abſurdity, that Matthew, writing in Jeruſalem, and with the other Apoſtles, preaching there for many years, made extravagant lies, (which, from their nature, muſt be acknowledged to be of public notoriety,) the baſis of this new religion; and yet they brought over myriads of all ranks

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to the obedience of the faith, at the expence of whatever men hold dear in this world. What can be more unreaſonable than to require, as Deiſts do, that 'Jews and Gentiles, continuing ſuch, ſhould give ſuch evidence of theſe matters, as would convince unbelievers now, i. e. ſhould give evidence againſt themſelves?' What enraged enemies are apt to do, when facts are ſtrong againſt them, is to obſerve a phlegmatic ſilence, or to ſpread abroad ſome rumour; but never generouſly to avow the whole truth.

Having premiſed theſe obſervations, we may now enter into the detail. It is allowed that he was crucified, and buried in a new tomb, hewn out of a rock, wherein man was never laid. This ſentence ſhews, that there could be no ſecret paſſage made to the body, and that there was no other body in the place. It is univerſally agreed, that 'on the third day he was not in the ſepulchre.' A band of men, placed there by the jealous caution of the Jews, accounted for it in this wiſe: 'they ran terrified towards the city; proclaimed that they felt an earthquake, and ſaw an angel rolling away the ſtone from the entrance of the ſepulchre.' This was their firſt and conſiſtent relation, containing in it a cauſe, adequate to the effects produced. However, they varied afterwards, and lured by the bribes and promiſes of the rulers, (who now began to fear for their own lives and authority,) they were brought to ſay, that 'his Diſciples ſtole him away while they ſlept.' I ſhall now examine this miſerable evaſion: and firſt, it may be obſerved, that they ſtand ſelf-confuted, from the internal circumſtances of their own ſtory; for it contains within

within it two things, which they could not poſſibly know, if they were aſleep. If they were ſleeping, how could they be aſſured that he was ſtolen, and particularly, that he was ſtolen by his diſciples? Suppoſe a man to be produced in a court, as a witneſs of a fact which paſſed while he was aſleep; would it not excite the ridicule of the audience? In every point of view, this fabrication is abſurd: for what could the Diſciples propoſe to themſelves by carrying him away had the attempt been even practicable; they who had ſucceeded ſo ill with their living Maſter at their head, and who to a man forſook him, during his paſſion? Or how could they, from a ſtate of the moſt abject deſpondency, ſummon up reſolution enough for ſo hardy an enterprize? Its accompliſhment would have been difficult indeed. The tomb was on a hill; a ſtone cloſed the entrance; it was ſealed; the moon ſhone during the whole night, for it was the time of the paſſover; the Jews were all come up to keep the feaſt, ſo that every part overflowed with people; and above all, there was a band of Roman ſoldiers, whoſe diſcipline is known to have been ſo ſtrict, that it was death for any man to ſleep on his poſt. Where then is the probability that *any*, much leſs that *all* of them ſhould be found aſleep? But what proves that they did not ſleep, but did their duty, is this, that the rulers gave them money to huſh the matter; for if their ſleeping could have been proved, then the chief prieſts would have had them puniſhed with death, as the moſt effectual way of ſtifling the religion of Jeſus, and as a monument of its falſehood. It is curious enough to obſerve the irreſolution of the prieſts in coun-

cil. Some time after this, they even agreed with Gamaliel, that the hand of God *might be* in the matter, though no reaſonable perſon can think, that they would have liſtened to his remonſtrance, had they really been perſuaded of what they at firſt gave out. This ſuſpence, this uncertainty in their counſels, proves that they were racked by contending paſſions. In this fluctuating ſtate, with ſtrong worldly incitements in one ſcale, and ſtrong proofs in the other, they acted juſt as I ſhould have expected from human nature. Many preferred eaſe and authority to truth, and many were converted; for we read, that *great multitudes of the prieſts were obedient to the faith.*

In this whole affair, the Apoſtles acted directly the reverſe of impoſtors who would have gone elſewhere, or waited till the evidences againſt them had been forgotten; but the Apoſtles began their teſtimony to his reſurrection, in the very time when, and at the very place where they affirmed this fact to have happened. Impoſtors would not have committed the ſecret to ſo many men and women, who, by confeſſion, might free themſelves from torture, and ſecure a reward. Impoſtors have, moreover, ſome profit or aggrandizement in view; but it will be hard to ſhew what the diſciples had in view, except ſtripes, priſons, ſhip-wrecks, and death. Neither are they the only witneſſes of his reſurrection; he was ſeen by five hundred perſons at once; (20) for, about a week after his ariſing, he appointed a meeting of his eleven diſciples in Galilee, when, moſt probably, thoſe others ſaw him; and his intention ſeems to have been, to ſhew himſelf to

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(20) Weſt on the Reſur.

as many as would come there. (21) It is not the cuſtom of liars to appeal to ſo many witneſſes, as is done here, the fifth of which number, might be ſufficient to authenticate a fact.

We have a ſtanding evidence of Chriſt's reſurrection in the firſt day of the week. This was inſtituted immediately, in commemoration of that fact, and has been continued down ever ſince. This ſhews, at leaſt, that they bore their teſtimony to it from the beginning, and that it was no fiction of after times. For if the Apoſtles had, a while, poſterior to this event, aſſerted in their writings, that he aroſe, and inſinuated, that the firſt day of the week was obſerved on that account, from the time of his riſing; then every one muſt have ſeen, that no ſuch firſt day had been kept; ſo that here would be not only a uſeleſs falſehood, but one which would undo all, being ſo manifeſtly untrue.

Again, without Chriſt's reſurrection, the ſubſequent zeal of his diſciples, and the propagation of his religion into ſo many parts, are unaccountable. Nothing elſe could inſpire his followers with ſuch heroic ardour, as this work required. If he had never riſen, they, of all the Jews, muſt have treated his memory with the greateſt rancour, being ſo cruelly duped by his promiſes, and expoſed to ſuch ſevere trials.

From the way in which the Apoſtles relate this and the other miracles, their regard for truth ſufficiently appears; for, if in the relation of them, they had ſet down their own inventions, (which, I ſuppoſe a Deiſt believes) we muſt think they would have proceeded in a different man-

(21) Grotius de verit.

ner, (22) as, that the traders who reſiſted in the temple were ſtruck dead; that Chriſt was transfigured before thouſands; that inſtead of raiſing three, he raiſed three hundred; that they themſelves were impriſoned from the inſtant of his crucifixion to his reſurrection; that then he walked publicly through Jeruſalem, &c. But their reſerve, and cautious limitations prove, that they were influenced by veracity alone.

It was neither neceſſary, or right, that our Saviour ſhould ſhew himſelf to the chief prieſts, and all the Jewiſh people. The great object of the reſurrection, was to convince the diſciples, who were to be the witneſſes, and therefore it was unneceſſary to appear to ſuch as were not. It is more than probable the others would not have believed; for unmoved they had ſeen him raiſe Lazarus from the dead; nay, on that very day, the prieſts concerted his death, leſt he ſhould draw the people from their influence. If it be ſaid, they ſhould have teſtimony that he aroſe, I anſwer, that they had this from the ſoldiers, which, circumſtanced as it was, was as full an aſſurance to them, as, if they themſelves had ſeen him. If ſome of them ſtill continued refractory, that proves nothing; for if a revelation be never clearly enough atteſted, ſo long as any perſon chooſes to remain credulous, then it is impoſſible that it ſhould ever be clear. It is not extraordinary that they, who reject the teſtimonies for the reſurrection, cannot agree among themſelves what quantity of teſtimony would be ſufficient; ſome requiring that he ſhould have appeared before all the prieſts and people; and ſome,

(22) Stephens on Mir.

ſome, that he ſhould have appeared before the Roman empire. But to ſuch perſons, we may anſwer in his words, '*ye know not what ye aſk.*' They never take time to conſider the conſequences of their objections; for either the Jewiſh prieſts and people would have believed, or they would not. If they had believed, is it not evident, that unbelievers, at this day, would treat the whole as a national affair, deviſed to free themſelves from the heavy yoke of the law of Moſes; and on that ground, they would argue againſt the miracles and prophecies; againſt the former, as not being done before enemies, and in ſuch a way, as to eſcape ſuſpicion; againſt the latter, by ſaying that it could not be proved, that the prophecies concerning Meſſiah, were not forged; whereas, on the preſent ſcheme, the Jews, who are enemies to our faith, are the guardians of theſe prophecies. Joſephus, ſpeaking of that age, draws a frightful picture of the profligacy of the rulers; he profeſſes his belief, that the earth would have ſwallowed them up, if the Romans had not deſtroyed the place; (23) wherefore, from ſuch men, a thorough and effectual converſion could not be expected. Some of thoſe lovers of the world would, through fear of death, certainly have renounced the truth. Thoſe monſters of cruelty were not diſpoſed to propagate a ſelf denying religion; for had they believed, they muſt have gone to preach Jeſus over the world, and ſo have forfeited the eaſe and dignity which they enjoyed. Inſtead of domineering over the people, they muſt have been contented to be treated as malefactors by the Pagans, for preaching

(23) Skelton's Diſcourſes, vol. 1.

ing againſt the eſtabliſhed Idolatry, and as murderers by their own countrymen, for condemning the Meſſiah. Some would have recanted; but if any of the original witneſſes had betrayed their truſt, this, humanly ſpeaking, would have ruined Chriſtianity. Again, had the mob ſeen him, and believed, they would have proceeded to open violence to make him a king; for if they were about to do ſo when he fed them with five barley loaves, what would they not have done after this? They would have filled Jeruſalem with tumult; would have aſſaulted the Roman garriſon, in hopes of temporal redemption, and Chriſt muſt have deſcended beneath the dignity of his character; for the Romans would have ſuſpected it to be a national conſpiracy againſt their government. Moreover, if they had believed, we ſhould have loſt the argument from that ſtanding miracle, the preſent diſperſion of the Jews, and great part of the argument ariſing from the propagation of the Goſpel. The victory of the Apoſtles over their own prejudices, the power and authority of the prieſts, is far more convincing, than if they were ſupported by that power. From all this, it follows, that we have greater proofs in the unbelief of the Jews, than we could have in their belief. I will ſuppoſe now, that the Sanhedrim had ſeen him without believing, which is the more probable ſuppoſition. It is pretty clear to me, that they would have denied the fact, from their putting a direct lie in the mouths of the ſoldiers. Here would be a contrary teſtimony, claſhing with that of the firſt Chriſtians. How many would have preferred the evidence of the chief

prieſts to theirs, which muſt have been materially leſſened thereby; whereas, in the true ſtate of the caſe, the prieſts were ſo circumſtanced, as to be incapable of giving any direct evidence at all. It is not unlikely, that if Chriſt had ſhewed himſelf to the council, they would either have pretended, that it was a different perſon, or that he had not really been dead before; and ſo they would have laid hold on him, to have him deſtroyed again, in which caſe, he muſt either have ſuffered a ſecond death, or he muſt have been working miracles forty days, to preſerve himſelf from their fury; or he muſt have vaniſhed out of their hands, and then they would ſay it was a phantom, and that they only ſaw ſomething like him. After this, when the Apoſtles would appeal to them for the truth of his reſurrection, and that they would anſwer in this manner, it requires no induſtry, to ſhew how materially this would affect the credit of the fact.

Let us now conſider the abſurdity of the requiſition, that he ſhould have appeared before the world. If he ſhewed himſelf in China, Japan, or any other country, it is obvious that he could only tell them of his miracles and reſurrection; but it is as obvious that they would not believe this, unleſs they ſaw them repeated: from thence, he muſt have proceeded to other kingdoms, and have acted in a like manner, which would have detained him many hundreds of years on earth, and he muſt have been crucified often. It is a very fallacious notion to imagine, that Chriſt's appearance before the Roman empire, would have completely obviated

viated the cavils of ſtubborn infidelity, had the thing been practicable, and crowned with ſucceſs. (24) It would be plauſibly urged at this day, that the whole was a political ſcheme, entered into by the then rulers, to overthrow the abſurd, popular religion of the times, which had loſt its influence ſo far, as to co-operate but a little way, in aid of the civil powers; that the fact is known only from four or five hiſtorians of that age, who might have been rewarded for inſerting it; that in an arbitrary government, no writer dared to contradict it; that the propagation of the ſtory was owing to force; that they who ſpread it, met not oppoſition, but countenance, and that, therefore, poſterity cannot be convinced, that they themſelves believed in it. Theſe arguments could not be eaſily anſwered; and it is certain, that before this time, the ingenuity of man would have added others to them. It is curious enough, to examine the conduct of unbelievers, in making this objection. They would inſinuate, that the reſurrection not being public, is the cauſe of their incredulity. Why then do they not believe in the public reſurrection of Lazarus? Upon the whole, the plan adopted by Almighty wiſdom, appears the beſt, even to our weak underſtandings. When I contemplate the difficulties attending the *oppoſite ſchemes*, I am ready to cry out with Paul, "*Oh! "the depth*," &c. The miracles of Jeſus Chriſt are alſo authenticated by the teſtimony of enemies, as well Jews as Gentiles. Though this kind of teſtimony is not to be much regarded, when, to the prejudice of thoſe for whom they have

(24) Prieſtley's Inſtit. vol. 2.

have a declared averſion, yet, it has always been thought of great weight, when favourable. I ſhall begin with Joſephus, who makes very honourable mention of Chriſt, and of his works. The paſſage is ſo very full and explicit, that probably it is the chief reaſon why it has been called in queſtion. (25) It is found in all the old Greek and Latin manuſcripts, which are numerous, without a ſingle exception. Though Juſtin and Tertullian have omitted to uſe it in their diſputes with the Jews, yet this is only a negative argument againſt it. Chryſoſtom, who wrote after Jerom and Euſebius, when its exiſtence cannot be denied, does not apply it, though in a tract, he has contended againſt the Jews. Joſephus gives the hiſtory of five falſe Meſſiahs; and can it be imagined, that he who mentions Judas of Galilee, and Theudas, would neglect to mention Jeſus? If Tacitus ſpeaks of him, by a ſtronger reaſon would the Jewiſh hiſtorian. The early prejudice which the Jews conceived againſt this elegant writer, muſt have proceeded from his recording ſome diſagreeable truths. The beſt objections againſt the paſſage, are founded on a miſinterpretation of ſome paſſages thereof. It is certain, however, that a reſpectable catalogue of learned names will be found *againſt*, as well as *for* this celebrated paragraph, in *Fabricii Syllabus Scriptorum*. Let us then ſuppoſe, that Joſephus has ſuppreſſed his name entirely: What ſurmiſes ſhould this raiſe in the mind? Or to what can ſuch a ſilence be attributed? When he particularizes the deeds of the falſe Meſſiahs; ſpeaks of John the Baptiſt, as a man

(25) Chapman's Euſeb.

man of great reputation, and of James, the brother of Jeſus? Can his ſilence be owing to this, that Chriſt was leſs remarkable than the others? No man will ſay ſo, for certainly he was the moſt remarkable of any. Joſephus had other motives to induce him to ſpeak of Jeſus. The followers of the latter branded the Jewiſh people with the abominable crime of ſlaying the Redeemer of the world; and it became him, who was always zealous for the law, and for his nation, to wipe off ſo foul an imputation, if he was able. Beſides, as he was of the prieſtly line, his own father muſt have been one of thoſe who condemned Jeſus to death. A vindication of the Sanhedrim muſt, therefore, have been a taſk, grateful to himſelf, a compliment to his countrymen, and acceptable to the Romans, who conſidered the Chriſtians as enemies to the Gods of the empire. Amidſt ſuch incitements to ſpeak out, ſuch marked taciturnity can only be aſcribed to a conſcious inability, and the power of truth. I confeſs, it gives me ſincere pleaſure to obſerve the phlegm and irreſolution of the hiſtorian, who, from the ſuggeſtions of policy, and an affection for this world, preferred eaſe, and the ſunſhine of princely favour, to the dreary and rugged paths, wherein the firſt Chriſtians were obliged to tread. Wherefore, I ſay, that Joſephus, conſidered in any light, furniſhes an irrefragable evidence for the miracles of Chriſt.

The next Jewiſh teſtimony which I ſhall cite, is *Toldoth Jeſu*, or the Book of the Generation of Jeſus, which is thought to have been compoſed very early by that nation. Voltaire, in his uſual lying manner, affirms, that this gives an account

of

of Jeſus very different from that of the Evangeliſts. To ſhew the falſity of this, I refer the reader to Wagenſeil's *tela ignea Satanæ*, wherein he will find the writing in queſtion. It allows that Jeſus was born at Bethlehem, that he raiſed a man from the dead, that he healed a leper, that he cauſed ſtones to ſwim on Jordan, that he rode into Jeruſalem on an Aſs, that Judas gave him up, that he was crowned with thorns, that after his crucifixion twelve men went through twelve kingdoms perſuading men that he roſe again, and did perſuade multitudes.

The next which I ſhall mention is the Jewiſh diſputant in Celſus, who acknowledges the coming of the Magi, and the wonders of Jeſus, which he ſays were learned by him in Egypt. Laſtly, in the Talmud, that famous repoſitory of their national traditions, ſtands the following narrative concerning Jeſus Chriſt: that he found a ſtone in the temple whereon the ark was wont to reſt; that this ſtone had the tetragrammaton written upon it; that he wrote the ineffable name in parchment, and concealed it in his thigh; that by its virtue he reſtored the lame, healed lepers, raiſed the dead, and walked on the ſea. (26) Tertullian, in his treatiiſe againſt the Jews, ſays, ye do not deny that he wrought miracles. From all this we learn that the early Jews never diſputed againſt the miraculous facts; they only refuſed to draw the fair inference from them.

Neither have the Pagans omitted to mention ſuch facts, as we might expect would fall under their cognizance. It is certain that Pontius Pilate tranſmitted ſome accounts of Chriſt to Rome; for

(26) Chap. 9.

for it was cuſtomary with the Roman governors of provinces to apprize their maſters of any extraordinary incidents. Theſe accounts, or acts as they are called, are openly appealed to by the firſt Chriſtians in their hiſtories and apologies preſented to the ſenate and people, by Juſtin, by Tertullian, by Euſebius, by Oroſius. The authenticity of theſe acts is farther ſtrengthened by the conduct of the Heathens, who, to counteract them, forged falſe acts. Theſe, by the order of the perſecuting Maximin, were taught to children in the public ſchools, to inſpire the riſing generation with a hatred for Chriſtianity. (27) But they gained little credit. They betrayed themſelves by errors in chronology, making the crucifixion under Pontius Pilate before he came to the government at all. It is thus that the writings of the unlettered apoſtles, had they alſo been mere inventions, would have been fraught with geographical, and chronological errors, with miſrepreſentations of manners and cuſtoms. It is almoſt certain, however, that embelliſhments have been added to theſe acts. That the non-compliance of the ſenate prevented the arbitrary Tiberius from enrolling Chriſt among the Gods, is ſuppoſed to be the chief. This is expoſed by Mr. Gibbon with great pleaſantry and good humour. But the edge of his raillery is blunted a good deal, when a man reads Dion Caſſius, and finds (28) *that* this emperor ſuffered decrees to be made contrary to his opinion; (29) *that* the ſenate oppoſed him about the funeral of Livea; and *that* while Sejanus was in power, they deſpiſed

(27) Euſeb. Ec. Hiſt. Lib. 1. (28) Lib. 57. (29) Lib. 58.

deſpiſed him. The whole matter is canvaſſed by the learned Vandale, with temper, and great ingenuity, who rejects ſome adventitious circumſtances, without impairing the foundation upon which they were built. I need hardly obſerve that all ſuppoſititious ornaments have disfigured Chriſtianity.

After Pontius Pilate, there are few perſons ſo circumſtanced as to make us think that they would be apt to mention the miracles; for the actions performed by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, were not proper ſubjects for profane hiſtory, which concerns itſelf with politics rather than religion. It would have been thought very ſingular, if Dr. Robertſon, in his hiſtory of Charles the Vth, had ſtepped out of his way to record any wonderful phenomena in the natural world. An impartial man will always conſider whether a writer's ſubject leads him to the recital of particular facts, or whether it would deter him from it. The only perſons, then, from whom we have reaſon to expect an account of the miracles, are thoſe who early oppoſed Chriſtianity in their books. Now, thoſe are Celſus, Philoſtratus, Hierocles, Porphery, and Julian, all of whom without a ſingle exception admit the miracles. Celſus ſuppoſes that he did them by magic, which he learned in Egypt, whilſt he removed from his preſence ſuch as might learn his arts. Philoſtratus and Hierocles, in ſet treatiſes, allow his wonders, and oppoſe to them thoſe of Apollonius Tyaneus. (30) Porphery admits that he was tranſlated into heaven, (31) and Julian that he healed the

(30) Euſeb. dem. Evan. Lib. 3. (31) Cyril adver. Julian. Lib. 6.

the lame, the blind, and exorciſed Demoniacs. Here are the acknowledgments of bitter adverſaries. Mr. Gibbon knew that it would be too groſs an impoſition on his readers, if he denied that the Pagans admitted the miracles; he therefore allows it, however he endeavours to take off its force, by moſt diſingenuouſly aſſerting that both parties admitted the miracles of each other: but I am yet to learn where Jeſus Chriſt or his diſciples make ſuch a conceſſion.

The only noted Heathen writers of the miraculous age, are Seneca, and Pliny the elder. Dr. Watſon thinks it poſſible that the latter of thoſe glanced at the miracles, when he calls chriſtianity *malefica ſuperſtitio.* This epithet ſignifies *wonder-working* in the Theodoſian code. Bingham has cited paſſages in his antiquities, to ſhew that the primitive Chriſtians were called *Magicians.* But be that as it may, it is clear that no Heathen of that day, who preferred his life and property to truth, would make honourable mention of the miracles. Who would dare to write or ſpeak in their favour under Nero, who raiſed a perſecution ſo bloody and barbarous againſt the Chriſtian name? It is certain that any man would have gained much favour by writing againſt them. The rigid ſilence obſerved by Seneca, by Plutarch, &c. (when by ſpeaking out they would have pleaſed their reſpective princes,) is a ſtrong preſumption that they could not invalidate the foundation of the goſpel. All the firſt apologiſts ſpeak of the facts as inconteſtably true, as done in the preſence of multitudes: to this no confutation is returned; the ſword is applied to cut the knot which they were unable to untie. When I ſee Celſus the Greek, and Tripho the Jew arguing

on

on *preſumptions*, I am convinced they had nothing to oppoſe to plain facts. When all religions were tolerated but the Chriſtian, when all books were preſerved but the Chriſtian, I find that the Heathens laboured under the ſame want of evidence, as an unbeliever does at this day; for they go almoſt wholly on the ſeeming contradictions in the Evangeliſts. Therefore, the ſilence of Heathen cotemporaries is ſo far from being an argument againſt, that it is an argument in favour of the miracles; for if Celſus and the others had believed that the ſilence proceeded from a general incredulity, they muſt have preſſed this ſtrongly; whereas they forbear urging the argument from ſilence at all, knowing that this would make againſt them. If no darkneſs overſpread Judea at the crucifixion, how eaſy would it have been to have convicted the Apoſtles of lying, by the teſtimony of a whole province. I have always conſidered it as a proof of unreaſonableneſs in Deiſts, when they require that perſons continuing Pagans ſhould give ſuch teſtimony as would make infidels believers. We confide in the hiſtory of Rome, written by Romans; of Alexander, written by Greeks; of Chriſt, by Chriſtians; and we are much better perſuaded of their authenticity, than if they had been written by ſtrangers or enemies; as we might then ſuſpect their integrity or knowledge of the facts.

Mr. Gibbon has ſupplied unbelievers with a ſubterfuge, when any thing reſpecting Chriſt is mentioned by a Pagan. They are to anſwer that it may have been credulouſly adopted from the Chriſtians. This is what he himſelf has anſwered in the caſe of the temples dedicated to our Saviour, by Severus and Hadrian; for which we have

have the teſtimony of the Heathen Lampridius. Thus the reader ſees that by a *may be* the plaineſt evidence may be eluded. He will learn, moreover, from what has been ſaid above, that it is only incidentally and then curſorily that we are to expect mention of the circumſtances in the goſpel from Heathens handling ſubjects of a nature ſo different. If Tacitus and Suetonius had not been writing the life of Nero, we ſhould have heard nothing from Heathens about the maſſacre of the Chriſtians; and yet ſurely it would not have been leſs true on that account. It is thus that Macrobius and Dion ſpeak incidentally of the ſlaughter of the innocents; that Suetonius mentions the taxing of the world under Auguſtus; Tacitus the crucifixion of Chriſt; and Pliny, that the ſacrament was diſpenſed, and that Jeſus was the object of praiſe.

It is a favourite topic with Deiſts to repreſent the miraculous age in ſuch a light, as that men might think that all nature was then unhinged; that the wonders were ſo repeated and aſtoniſhing, that they muſt neceſſarily have captivated the attention of the univerſe. But this ſtatement is very unfair. There was no miracle ſo univerſal as to arreſt the faculties of mankind as it were in ſpite of themſelves. The acts of the apoſtles exhibit to us a hiſtory of the church for twenty-eight years after our Saviour's aſcenſion It is here that a man ſhould look for the works done by the diſciples. He will find from them that there was no oſtentatious profuſion of miracles in any part; that the apoſtles reaſoned out of the prophecies; conferred the gift of tongues; occaſionally healed the ſick, the lame, the blind, and, in two inſtances, raiſed the dead. He will find nothing done

done which would extort by violence the aſſent, or irreſiſtibly weigh down the wills of the incurious or profligate.

I can well conceive, that, in the infancy of this religion, many a ſelf-important philoſopher might have been in the ſame great city with an Apoſtle, without deigning to attend to an illiterate perſon, whom he conſidered in the ſame light as we would do a ſuperſtitious Portugueſe: and men had not in theſe days authentic means of being informed of facts, without perſonal inquiry, as they have now, when ways of univerſal communication are opened by journals, news-letters, and literary ſocieties.

I would aſk him who talks of the defect of heathen teſtimony, whether he believes in the ſtrange prodigies which preceded the deſtruction of Jeruſalem; for they are recorded by Tacitus, as well as by Joſephus. If he rejects them, then it appears that Pagan teſtimony does not gain his aſſent, though he makes the want of it a plea for unbelief. But ſuppoſing him to ſay, that he would yield implicit credit to a miracle confirmed by Jews, Pagans, and Chriſtians, which is the very higheſt evidence that can be given; even this has been vouchſafed in that ſtupendous one wrought when Julian attempted to rebuild the temple at Jeruſalem. Concerning this temple, Jeſus Chriſt had predicted that not one ſtone ſhould be left upon another, and that Jeruſalem ſhould be trodden down by the Gentiles till their times were fulfilled. The apoſtate emperor granted permiſſion to the Jews to rear this up a-new; nay he even patronized the work, and ſet his friend Alypius over it, which if com-

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pleted, muſt have defeated the prophecy. (32) Here is a public intereſting project; a man of figure put at its head; much materials and workmen collected; the Jews fired with religious fervour; the place in the centre of the empire; the time moſt critical; the religious world ſtanding ſuſpended; the credit of Chriſtianity at ſtake; Paganiſm big with expectation, when the project diſappeared. Did the emperor relent? No. Were the agents diſobedient? No. Were the Jews lazy? No. Mr. Gibbon himſelf will tell you of their contributions, and of their carrying the earth for the undertaking in cloth of purple. Was there a foreign invaſion or domeſtic tumults? Did the Chriſtians oppoſe force to force? None of all theſe. Jews, Pagans, and Chriſtians concur unanimouſly in the account of its being demoliſhed by fire burſting from the earth, as often as the attempt was renewed. In this the Chriſtians triumph, and exult in their apologies, hiſtories, ſermons, addreſſed to friends and enemies; they relate the event; call upon eye witneſſes; appeal to the ſtanding marks of the fact; and defy the advocates of idolatry to gainſay the exactneſs of the relation. No man was better acquainted with the Jewiſh learning than Baſnage, who obſerves, that the Jews never copy from the works of Chriſtians. He quotes Rabbi Gedaliah, as vouching for this fact, and confeſſing, that fire melted the tools, and killed a great multitude of Jews. (33) Mr. Browne cites the authority of another Jew, Zamath David, as atteſting theſe fiery eruptions. But what can be more unequivocal and unexceptionable, than the teſtimony

(32) Warburton's Julian. (33) Eſſay on the Charac.

teſtimony of Ammianus Marcellinus, a Pagan, a dependant on, and an admirer of Julian. (34) He was an acknowledged lover of truth, cotemporary with the fact; when it happened, he was reſiding at Antioch, near the ſcene of action; he relates it deliberately, not as a report, but as a thing notorious; yet it ſeems as if extorted from him, merely to juſtify his character as an hiſtorian, ſeeing that he tells it naked, contrary to his uſual cuſtom. The author of the Decline and Fall, &c. confeſſes that this is enough to *ſtagger* infidelity. I am inclined to believe, that one reaſon why God permitted this miracle, was to ſhew the obſtinacy of infidels, who, if no ſuch thing had happened, would not fail to ſay, that they would have believed in one ſo circumſtanced. It anſwered many other ends. (35) It inſpired the Chriſtians with courage, at a time when many were relapſing into Paganiſm; and it cut off from the enemies of Chriſt all occaſion of glorying, who would have boaſted that they were defeating his prophecy, when their patron was accidentally taken away. Let ſuch as reject this miracle talk no more of defect of evidence, as it is plain they are reſolutely hardened againſt conviction.

I ſhall now recapitulate the proofs for the miracles of the goſpel, and then cloſe this ſection with a dilemma to which Deiſts are reduced. They have been proved from analogy, from the nature of the common facts, from Chriſt's grounding his miſſion upon them, from the circumſtances under which they are recorded, from the

(34) Warburton's Julian. (35) Moyle on the Thund. Leg. (36) Turretin de Miraculis.

belief of the writers, from their never having been contradicted, from the converſion of the world to Chriſtianity, from the Apoſtles expatiating ſo much on the witneſſing of the ſpirit, and from the teſtimonies of Heathens and Jews. (36) If a man ſays that there never was ſuch a perſon as Chriſt, then he contradicts Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny junior, Celſus and Lucian. If he ſays that there was ſuch a perſon, and that he impoſed on his diſciples, how could this be done? Could he impoſe upon them that he aroſe from the dead; that they ſaw his aſcenſion, and had the gift of tongues? If he ſays they agreed to paſs this fable, then how can he account for their inventing ſuch an one, which if falſe, muſt be confeſſed by all to be as unlikely to take as any that can be thought on; nay, it was impoſſible to perſuade people that they ſaw miracles, if none were wrought? How does it agree with their morals, ſtate of life, education, proſpects to be attained, their aſcribing every thing to God, their depreciating narratives of themſelves, their remaining ſo ſteady to each other amidſt ſuch temptations to diſcover, ſuch impious maſters having ſuch pious ſcholars, but above all, with their getting the miracles believed? Or, if he ſays that the miracles were inſerted afterwards, then the connexion of the whole book is deſtroyed, for the common matters are built upon them. He cannot ſay that the inſertions were made immediately after, while the actors were ſtill living, for then they might as well have been made at firſt, and after a while they could not be made, becauſe the books were every where diſperſed. Beſides, when the goſpels were written, the goſpel of Chriſt had been preached in many places; if then the

(36) Turretin de miraculis.

the miracles had been firſt ſpoken of in the written goſpels, the people muſt have found this to be a new ſyſtem, fraught with falſehoods; therefore, on the ſcheme of infidelity, the people hazarded their all for what they knew was falſe, and believed without having any cauſe for belief.

SECT. XII.

(1) We never ſhould have had the chimera or pegaſus, if the lion and horſe had no exiſtence. Falſe miracles are the expected, and almoſt neceſſary reſult of true. But as when two witneſſes ſwear one thing, and two other witneſſes ſwear the contrary, a wiſe judge would not equally reject them all, but weigh circumſtances; in like manner an impartial man will act in the caſe of miracles. Previous to examination, a perſon can only infer this from claims ſo univerſally made, that miracles have always been conſidered as ſufficient proofs of the divinity of a religion.

If we inſtitute a compariſon between the evidence for ſcripture miracles and for thoſe of any other book, hardly a ſhadow of ſimilitude will be found to ſubſiſt. It will be allowed by all ſuch as admit the being and providence of God, that the laws of nature depend wholly upon him. As he is not liable to caprice, a miracle, conſidered abſtractedly, is exceedingly improbable, unleſs it can be ſhewn to have a ſubſerviency to the ſchemes of wiſdom and goodneſs. Now, who that read the Heathen ſtory ever pretended that its miracles were directed to the accompliſhment

(1) Philip a Morney de verit.

ment of any dignified end? Are not the wonders aſcribed to the Heathen Gods mere arbitrary acts of unmeaning power, without plan and without beneficence? They are therefore deſtitute of that internal evidence ariſing from unity of deſign. Neither can it be pretended, that any of the Heathen religions ever attempted to eſtabliſh themſelves at firſt on open miracles. This is the excluſive privilege of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian revelations. They make mention, it is true, of miracles; but when? After parties were formed, had power in their hands, and veneration from the multitude. It is this which altogether diſcriminates the caſes. Men would not contradict what was delivered by authority. Few will be induced to riſk their eaſe from a love of truth; and there could be no other motive for contradicting them, as they neither affected any man in his family or fortune. On the report of a miracle, we may ſuppoſe that a Pagan would argue thus with himſelf: Though I am convinced of the falſehood of this, yet why ſhould I not acquieſce? The rulers may find it neceſſary; and would it not be abſurd in me to oppoſe it to my diſquiet; particularly as my conduct is not to be influenced by this miracle. (2) But the miracles of Jeſus, whoſe end was not to countenance but to deſtroy eſtabliſhed doctrines, could not be aſſented to without inconvenience, and therefore not without ſerious conviction: They were previous to the belief of Chriſtianity; they gave riſe to that belief; and therefore no argument can be offered againſt them from prejudice of education: every witneſs was a convert, and every believer had been

(2) Douglaſs on Miracles.

been once an enemy. In the caſe of the Heathen miracles, no one could ſtop their publication without fear; no one could publiſh thoſe of the Apoſtles but with fear. By oppoſing the former, a man incurred the hatred of the civil powers; but in the latter caſe the magiſtrate made a ſevere inquiſition. By expoſing the one, a degree of odium was procured; by expoſing the other, praiſe and rewards.

Again, Heathen miracles ſtand altogether and unconnected. The facts of the hiſtories wh in they are found do not depend on, or preſuppoſe them at all. They might therefore be invented afterwards. Neither are they ſet down in books publiſhed during that age, and reported to be done before enemies, which however ſhould be the caſe, to make them at all parallel with thoſe of the Apoſtles. They depend generally on the credit of the aruſpices and augurs, who might ſay what they pleaſed. Sometimes, indeed, in the heat of a battle, when no perſon had time to examine, a God was ſaid to have been ſeen fighting againſt the foe.

There is another eſſential difference ſubſiſting between the miracles of profane hiſtory, and thoſe of the ſcripture. It is this, that they who record the miracles of profane hiſtory, do not appear to believe them. Livy introduces them with a *fertur, memorant, fama eſt.* In the introduction of his hiſtory, he ſhews that he paid no implicit credit to the wonders which he now and then relates. Speaking of them, he ſays, this indulgence is due to antiquity. (3) In another place, in proportion to the ſimplicity of the people, prodigies were

(3) Lib. 24.

were ſpread abroad. (4) Val. Maximus, after relating many, ſays, he knows on what doubtful ground they ſtand. (5) Quintus Curtius ſays of them, "I tranſcribe more than I believe;" and I recollect that Herodotus ſays ſomewhere, I am bound to ſay what has been ſaid already, but not to believe.

Many of the Heathen miracles were reputed ſuch, merely from ignorance, being only natural effects, as ſhowers of blood, of ſtones, &c. When Agis went to invade Elis, ſacred to the Gods, he was diverted from his purpoſe by an earthquake, which was no miracle. (6) All of them will be found to fall under one or other of the following characters: either they were not publiſhed to the world till long after the time when they are ſaid to be performed, or they were not publiſhed in places where it is pretended the facts were wrought, but at a diſtance from the ſcene of action; or they were ſuffered to paſs without due examination, as coinciding with the opinions and prejudices of thoſe before whom they were reported; or they were ſupported by ſuch only as could detect the fraud. Theſe obſervations bear equally againſt ſuch Chriſtians as have, to the inconceivable prejudice of religion, forged the broad ſeal of Heaven, to confirm unwritten ways of worſhip. Mr. Hume, when writing his Hiſtory of England, might therefore have ſpared himſelf the trouble of ſedulouſly picking out the tales of legends, and inſerting them, in ſtudied phraſe, to wound Chriſtianity. Comparing thoſe ill-vouched fables with the well atteſted

(4) Lib. 1. (5) Lib. 9. (6) Douglaſs on Mir.

atteſted actions of Jeſus, is the ſame thing as if a man contraſted the ludicrous little pamphlet of Baron Munchauſens adventures with Byron's narrative.

After the times of the Apoſtles, there is perhaps no miracle ſo circumſtanced as to demand our aſſent, except one, which has been taken notice of already. As on the day when the Jews firſt eat of the corn of Canaan, the manna ceaſed, ſo as ſoon as the church could ſuſtain itſelf without miracles, they were withdrawn. Now that all the learning and great part of the power of the world are in favour of the goſpel, God leaves its propagation to human means, and will certainly exact an account from thoſe who might have promoted it, and did not. Kings ſet their great ſeals to the patent of a corporation at firſt; and if the ſeveral ſucceſſions of men ſhould whimſically demand a repetition of that act, no prince of dignity would comply.

Before we leave this ſubject, it may be proper to examine a Pagan miracle, which Hume has advanced with great parade, as being the ſtrongeſt he could find for his purpoſe: I mean that ſaid to be performed by Veſpaſian, on two men at Alexandria, the one lame, and the other blind. This ſtory is related, not vouched for, by Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dion Caſſius, all of whom vary from each other in their accounts of it. No one of them profeſſes that he ſaw the miracle, or that he believed in it; on the contrary, the firſt mentioned of theſe hiſtorians ſays, that the emperor was moved to do it by the tongues of his flatterers; after which declaration, it is pretty certain that he did not believe; and the ſecond affirms,

affirms, that it was after Veſpaſian had gone into the temple of Serapis, and made the God his friend, *propitiato multum Deo*; that two men, warned by this God in dreams, came to him applying for relief. I have no doubt but that the prince had two perſons brought before him; for many who were preſent continued to affirm this, in the days of Tacitus, when they had no reward to expect from a lie. If I heſitated to believe this, I ſhould be found to reaſon as fooliſhly as Deiſts; yet there is no cauſe why we ſhould imagine that the men were actually lame or blind. A conſideration of the caſe will lead us to conclude, that they were not. From the adulation of Joſephus, and the favourable reception which it met with in the emperor; from the number of prodigies and dreams recorded by (7) Dion Caſſius, it is certain that Veſpaſian affected popular arts of aggrandizement, which the meanneſs of his extraction rendered in ſome degree neceſſary. It is very probable that this was the end of the miracles in queſtion, from the purpoſes which they ſerved, according to thoſe three hiſtorians. One ſays he acquired majeſty and authority by them; another, that the Gods manifeſted to him their good will; and Dion ſays, that the opinion of his being a favourite of Heaven made him very famous. The reader ſees now that they were to ſerve a political uſe, and that no doctrine was attempted to be proved by them. He will be of opinion, that this meaſure was concerted with the prieſts, when Veſpaſian viſited the temple; and he will recollect, that the courtiers, who afterwards gave teſtimony to this matter,

(7) Lib. 66.

matter, could not be aſſured, that the patients were actually afflicted with theſe maladies, as being ſtrangers juſt arrived at the place. They muſt have depended on the aſſertions of the prieſts. The whole affair was plainly a colluſion, and is characteriſtic of the refined flattery of the Egyptians, courting imperial greatneſs. (8) But what emperor was flattered in the miracles of Chriſt? What eminent perſons found themſelves intereſted to ſupport, by their authority, the credit of his works? Yet, who dared at that time to call in queſtion the credit of Veſpaſian? A man muſt ſee with a glance, that theſe caſes are not at all parallel and yet this was the moſt plauſible; which Heathen antiquity, when ranſacked, could furniſh.

I need hardly mention the miracles at Abbe Paris's tomb, which, as is well known, were falſified on a critical examination, and the Janſeniſts found to be at the bottom. The Janſeniſts formed, at that time, a very powerful party in France, and it was cardinal Noailles, commiſſary who took the depoſitions of the perſons ſaid to be cured. The cardinal was archbiſhop of Paris, and head of the faction. The influence of ſuch diſtinguiſhed perſons, who were actuated as much by a hatred to the Jeſuits, and the bull Unigenitus, as by any other conſideration, gained a temporary credit to the works. At length, ſome of the deponents came to die, who confeſſed that they had been ſet on to feign ſickneſs; whilſt others, ſaid to be healed, were found to remain as ill as ever. Many thouſands attended the tomb; and Montgeron, an indefatigable and zealous

(8) Campbell on Mir.

zealous advocate for the miracles, could only find vouchers for nine cures. Even they acknowledged that they had ſtaid at the tomb whole days and nights; that they had taken medicines before and after their coming; ſo that it is not unlikely that they would have been cured equally at home. Dr Douglaſs enters into an induction of particulars, and ſhews that the diſorders of the nine were curable by art. What reſemblance is there between theſe accounts and the accounts of our Saviour's miracles, which were inſtantaneous, over all manner of diſeaſes, and over the elements? The archbiſhop of Sens, in his paſtoral inſtructions at that time, laid open the fallacy of theſe pretended works; and yet Mr. Hume ſays coolly, they never were, or could be contradicted. The king of France quaſhed them by an edict, and by ordering a wall to be built around the tomb; but on the ſuppoſition that the hand of God was in the matter, it is ridiculous to think, that any earthly power could avail to their ſuppreſſion. Not edicts only, but priſons, racks and death, in ten thouſand terrific forms, oppoſed themſelves, with giant fury, to the progreſs of Chriſtianity, though in vain. The Roman empire, becauſe ſhe had conquered the world, fondly imagined ſhe could vanquiſh Jeſus Chriſt; but when God had tried, and eſtabliſhed the faith of his church, and ſhewn that it was not extended by human means, he rent her idolatrous dominion to its baſe, and the croſs triumphed over her eagles.

It will be found, from what has been ſaid, that the miracles of ſcripture and profane hiſtory reſt upon very different evidence; and that they are much more eaſily diſtinguiſhable from each other,

other, than genuine coin is from counterfeit. It is no ordinary preſumption in favour of the former, that they have certain characteriſtic marks, which peculiarize them; for impoſtors are obliged to uſe like arts. (9) But where are the Heathens or Chriſtians, who, like Jeſus and his Apoſtles, appealed to God; did their miracles in his name; were poor, and had no powerful patrons; did them publicly; related the time, occaſion, place, circumſtances, perſons, bye-ſtanders; appealed to living monuments of the exerciſe of miraculous power, (10) as Quadratus the Athenian did, in his apology to Hadrian? Who, like the Apoſtles, avowed that they did their works before enemies; in a learned age; in a civilized country; unaccompanied by oſtentation; wrought for no worldly advantage; but inſtead thereof, provoking the fury of prieſts and magiſtrates? Who, like them, profeſſed to work miracles of a permanent nature, which might be reviewed and re-examined; which had nothing fantaſtical; which were foretold and acknowledged by adverſaries? When, therefore, an ignorant infidel tells us, with a ſneer, that there are miracles in Livy and the Golden Legend, as well as in the New Teſtament, we know what account to make of this idle babble.

We have ſeen now, that neither Pagan oracles or miracles afford the ſmalleſt preſumption for ſupernatural interference. The holy ſcriptures afford no ground for ſuch a ſurmiſe, though from want of conſideration, ſome have believed otherwiſe, in the caſe of Moſes and the magicians. But if the former of thoſe had done no greater works

(9) Jortin's Remarks, &c. (10) Euſeb. Ec. Hiſt. Lib. 4.

works than the latter, I am poſitive that few would deem them to be certain miraculous effects, but rather effects of art. I have no doubt, but that the magicians themſelves conſidered their own performances in that light; for when they were unable to imitate the miracle of the lice, they cried out, *this is the finger of God*; as much as to ſay, this has not been effected by the finger or ſleight of man, but by the author of nature. Such an exclamation would be prepoſterous, if all conſidered him as concerned equally in the foregoing. Therefore the conteſt between the magicians and Moſes, was not a trial of ſkill and power between their divinities, as many have ſuppoſed. The queſtion was, whether Moſes had done his wonders by the power of magic or nature, or whether they were proofs that he was commiſſioned by Jehovah. With this view, Pharaoh ſent for men, who had received a ſimilar education. Their partial imitation of the three firſt miracles, was not above the reach of art. The wiſdom of the Egyptians was proverbial. They always excelled in feats of dexterity; and that they had carried chymical knowledge to a great height even then, is plain, from Moſes being able to ſtamp the golden calf to powder. After weighing theſe circumſtances, their performances are, by no means, wonderful. Such as know any thing of antiquity, will allow, that the charming of ſerpents, was a practice of old time, common in Africa. Even at this day, perſons are ſeen in the ſtreets of Cairo, with ſerpents crawling upon their members. This being premiſed, it is eaſy to ſee, that a ſerpent might be ſpeedily ſubſtituted for a rod; their long flowing garments would befriend the deceit; and the whole

whole was done before perſons prejudiced in their favour, who would not be ſcrupulouſly prying. We have ſeen, at leaſt, as extraordinary feats in our own day. It was by Moſes's rod eating up theirs, that his caſe is chiefly diſcriminated from that of the magicians a thing; evidently inimitable by human device. Their next attempt to turn water into blood, is very eaſily explained. All the waters in Egypt had been previouſly converted into blood by Moſes; inſomuch, that we are told how the Egyptians were obliged to dig pits by the river. Though this be plainly aſſerted in the Bible, yet Voltaire wonders where the magicians could procure water. It muſt, therefore, have been on the relatively ſmall portions of water in the pits, that the magicians practiſed; and how eaſy is it to make a colourleſs fluid become coloured? In the caſe of the frogs alſo, it was not till after the land had been filled with them, that they attempted an imitation. This reaſon is ſtrengthened exceedingly, by conſidering the fourth miracle, which they could not mimic. It appears, from the text, that in this caſe, there was no previous notice given of what was intended to be done, ſo that the magicians had not time to contrive an expedient, and therefore failed. It is no argument againſt our poſition, that the magicians are ſaid to *do ſo*; they did ſo only in ſome general way, which is called enchantments. (11) Men ſpeak after this manner every day; we ſay a juggler eats fire, ſwallows a knife, though we do not believe that he does ſo in reality. It is certain that Moſes did not intend that theſe words ſhould be taken in

(11) Farmer on Mir.

in their full latitude, becauſe, when all the waters in Egypt were turned into ſome red ſubſtance, the magicians are ſaid to *do ſo*, which, ſtrictly ſpeaking, is impoſſible. Joſephus and Philo take the miracles of the magicians for illuſions; they would not allow to finite intelligences the power of creation. None of the prophets contraſt their works with any among the Heathen, but appeal to them, as being abſolutely deciſive and excluſive proofs. Chriſt would have himſelf believed on for the work's ſake, and deſires them to tell John of the miracles. Speaking of the falſe Chriſts, he ſays they will *give*, or undertake to ſhew ſigns, not that they will work miracles; ſo it happened. One of them undertook to divide Jordan; another to make the walls of Jeruſalem fall down. On not fulfilling their promiſes, they were deſerted. In the 13th chap. of Deuteronomy, Moſes does not refer to miracles, but to the foretelling of ſigns, or portents ſuch as eclipſes, &c. which might be foreknown by natural means. The man of ſin was to come with lying wonders, i. e. with no true miracles. There is not a paſſage in ſcripture, which, if duly examined, will ſupport the notion of any miraculous agency, in evil ſpirits. Now, ſeeing that we know nothing of the nature and operations of thoſe accurſed angels, but as we are inſtructed by holy writ, what can be more irrational, than impiouſly to overleap the bounds preſcribed; to aſſert, without any evidence, that they may have wrought miracles; and ſo communicate to them theſe diſtinctive characters, which the Deity ſeems to have preſerved to himſelf. The impropriety of ſuch a conduct, appeared very glaring to Mr. Farmer. He ſcruples not to

ſay,

ſay, that it differs in nothing from blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt, except that there is no malice meant to Chriſt in the aſſeveration. When Elijah contended with the prieſts of Baal, he never inſinuated that an examination of the doctrines ſhould precede our aſſent to the divinity of miracles. His demand was, that the God who anſwered by fire, ſhould be obeyed, without any regard to the doctrines. In phyſics, it is unphiloſophical to aſcribe qualities to bodies, which we never knew them to poſſeſs. The ſame rule ſhould be obſerved in theology, which would reſtore the reins of nature to its author. However true this obſervation may be, yet I do not expect that divines will generally acquieſce in it. The following obſervation, taken from Eraſmus, may ſtill be applied to many: (12) *Amplectuntur medici, non aſpernuntur jureconſulti, recipiunt philoſophi, ſi quid ad illorum profeſſionem inſtaurandum conducit, ſoli theologi pertinaciter reclamamus, et ipſis noſtris invidemus bonis.*

SECT. XIII.

IT has been ſhewn already, that the converſion of ſo many to the Chriſtian religion would be a thing unaccountable, without miracles. When we conſider the paſſions of the human mind, it would be equally unaccountable, if all men had been converted by them. Preciſely what we ſhould expect from the nature of man, happened on the working of theſe miracles. Many were reformed, but the greater number, preferring pre-

(12) Eraſmi Apologia.

ſent gratifications, and ſhrinking from the ſtorms of perſecution, ſheltered themſelves under the protection of the civil powers, and were blinded againſt conviction.

Moreover, Jews and Gentiles had each their peculiar prejudices againſt the goſpel. The Jews of that generation were exceſſively wicked. Joſephus is of opinion that God would have deſtroyed them by an earthquake, or by fire, if Titus had not demoliſhed their place. (1) Dr. Whitby has made it appear, that there was no law of the two tables, which they had not violated by their gloſſes. Rapine and ſedition ſtalked triumphant through the land. Rumour and traditions deformed the majeſty of their religion, and nouriſhed opinions quite repugnant to the written law. From this ſpirit of deluſion, they looked for a Meſſiah, who ſhould go forth to conquer, and who, like the imperial robbers of the earth, would found his throne in blood. Infatuated men! as if his ways were as their ways, and as if the omniſcient God reaſoned like feeble mortals! Hence it was, that Trypho the Jew declared, that Jeſus could not be the Meſſiah, as he did not reſtore the kingdom to Iſrael. They were perſuaded that no one would know whence he was to come; that he was to drag captive monarchs at his chariot wheels; that he was to abide for ever. Thus, without waiting reſignedly to know what ſort of kingdom it would pleaſe God to erect by his Son, they erected the creature of their imaginations into one ſuited to an overweening fancy. It was to correct theſe high and viſionary whimſies, that John the Baptiſt became the

(1) Neceſſity of the Chriſt. Rev.

the forerunner of Jeſus Chriſt. The lowly appearance of our Redeemer became a *ſtone of ſtumbling* to perſons beſotted with ſuch prejudices. Many who entertained fond hopes gave him up abſolutely, on ſeeing his humiliation at his crucifixion. Not only his perſon, but his doctrines alſo, militated againſt the favourite maxims of the Jewiſh multitude. He paid no deference to the deciſions of their Rabbies. He required purity of heart, they wiſhed to think, that waſhing the body would ſuffice; he called them to ſufferings and perſecution, inſtead of ſubduing their enemies: he prohibited polygamy, reproved the pride and hypocriſy of their Scribes and Phariſees, when it was proverbial among them, that if Heaven was reſerved for two men only, one of them would be a Scribe, and the other a Phariſee. They looked upon the nations as ſpittle; but he gave no excluſive diſtinctions to the ſeed of Abraham.

As to the rulers, they hated him from the beginning; ſome, fearing for their authority with the people; ſome, becauſe he was a man of no worldly ambition; becauſe his peculiar bleſſings were to the poor and the meek; becauſe he exhorted men to pray and give alms in ſecret, and becauſe he openly neglected their traditions. It is eaſy to ſee how oppoſite ſuch teaching was to the wiſhes of an haughty and vindictive Sanhedrim, who were perſuaded, moreover, from his reproaches, that he would have conferred no authority on them, and that if his miſſion were acknowledged, they muſt have been torn in pieces by the populace, for their inhuman treatment of the Son of God. Heated thus by various conflicting paſſions, there was no deſcription of men in

the land, capable of conſidering the evidences of his miſſion with honeſt attention. The ſame generation of Iſraelites, which held out againſt Chriſt, held out alſo againſt the whole Roman power; an equally frantic and more unaccountable deed.

Bating the dangers of life and property, Heathens of all deſcriptions had alſo their peculiar prejudices againſt the goſpel. It irritated the Roman emperors beyond the power of ſufferance, to hear, that a religion was ſpreading through the empire, which forbade men, either to offer idolatrous ſacrifices for their ſafety, to ſwear by their genius, or to be preſent at the ſports with which they gratified the people. The Chriſtian religion was not like other religious innovations, which conſiſted only in the introduction of ſome new ceremonies, without moleſting ancient uſages. It required an utter abolition of them all. But as the religions of Paganiſm were ſubſervient to politics, and therefore interwoven with the civil government of the empire, a change in one neceſſarily affected the other, to the chagrin of ſuch as had modelled the conſtitution to their own wiſhes. When they looked for an apotheoſis after death, Chriſtianity taught, that inſtead of becoming Gods, they might be conſigned to perdition. From theſe circumſtances, their minds became rankled againſt the followers of Jeſus.

With regard to the great men of that time, it appears that they knew but little of any particular religion; juſt like the great men of our own times, who are addicted wholly to politics, or their pleaſures. It is certain, that they did not underſtand Chriſtianity; for when they ſpeak of it,

it, they miſrepreſent it. I would appeal to a Deiſt, whether it be likely that a Heathen, calling the religion, taught by Jeſus, *exitiabilis ſuperſtitio*, knew any thing of its ſpirit. When Mr. Gibbon ſpeaks of perſons *rejecting* it immediately after its riſe, he would wiſh that we ſhould think they had examined; but facts evince the contrary. Indeed every candid reader of his works muſt obſerve, that he ſtudiouſly ſelects terms, which convey ungenerous inſinuations of this nature. It is not difficult to aſſign reaſons, why the rich and powerful would be inclined to refuſe a patient hearing to the doctrines of Chriſt. It would prejudice them at firſt, that a number of illiterate perſons had commenced their teachers, which prejudice would be increaſed mightily, when they would hear that the perſons were Jews, a people whom they hated for rejecting the principle of intercommunity, and whom, from their own defect of attention, they conſidered as credulous above meaſure. *Credat Judeus* had paſſed into a proverb. It is eaſy to ſee, that this diſtaſte was not likely to be done away, in ſuch, as in the pride of their hearts, condeſcended to hear the evangelical dogmas. The whole ſcheme of Chriſtianity was diametrically oppoſite to received maxims, and to Pagan ideas of magnificence. The breaſts of men, intoxicated with Roman notions of grandeur and conqueſt, were hardly ſuſceptible of reliſhing the pure and gentle virtues of the Goſpel of peace. When the Apoſtles or their followers preached in towns, and declared, that, as a preliminary, men muſt leave off whoredom, drunkenneſs, &c. is it not evident, that many, abandoned to their paſſions, would withdraw, and ever after, obſtinately refuſe

fuſe to hear any thing of that matter? It is an allowed of maxim, that it is harder to gain a victory over mens pleaſures and prejudices, than over their perſons. Hume has ſaid of the academic philoſophy, (2) that by flattering no irregular paſſion, it gains few partizans; by oppoſing ſo many vices and follies, it raiſes to itſelf abundance of enemies: a remark, which applies, with tenfold force, to the Chriſtian religion. He muſt be little acquainted with mankind, who has not obſerved how reſolutely many ſet themſelves againſt believing, and with what impatience they hear of theſe things which croſs their wiſhes, though in matters of little moment: but where life, family, fortune, reputation, pleaſure, were concerned, no degree of teſtimony would prevail with ſome. Preſent convenience has a wonderful influence on all men. How many are there who believe in the torments of the damned, and yet live on in ſin? How many ſquander away their eſtates, knowing that beggary and a priſon will be the certain conſequences of ſuch a conduct? Is not this ſaying of Horace applicable to immenſe multitudes, *Video meliora proboq. deteriora ſequor*? When the incentives are abſtracted, it is eaſy for a Deiſt to ſit in his cloſet, and think that he would have acted ſo and ſo in certain circumſtances.

There was no deſcription of men more incenſed againſt the teachers of the goſpel, than the Philoſophers. We learn from Lucian and others, how tenacious they were of their reſpective tenets. How galling then muſt it have been to find ſimple men requiring thoſe to become ſcholars,

(2) Eſſay 5. vol. 2.

lars, who had hitherto been the teachers of mankind, and to have their wiſdom, the fruit of long labour and travel, deemed nonſenſe? It was intolerable to ſee perſons of no learning vilifying the ſubtleties from which they derived their conſequence, and reclaiming a world which they had inſtructed, without effect. It is a well known foible in human nature, that it often grows more obſtinate by defeat, and reſolves ſtubbornly to allow no merit to the prevailing adverſary. In this controverſy, they muſt have been backed by an intereſted multitude. (3) When any religion is the eſtabliſhed one in a country, there are many engaged by the ſtrongeſt worldly motives to ſupport it. This obſervation holds particularly of Heathen religions, upon which the ſubſiſtence of immenſe numbers depended, as ſacrificers, prieſts, augurs, aruſpices, ſhrine-makers, painters, ſtatuaries, &c.

I believe it will be readily admitted, that idolatrous worſhip correſponded better to the ſentiments and paſſions of the vulgar, than the Chriſtian which came out among them ſimple and unadorned, requiring the moſt unſullied purity from its votaries. But heatheniſm had great powers to attract the people; myſterious rites, hidden doctrines, gorgeous ceremonies, kings and philoſophers. It called not its votaries ſo much to holineſs and reformation of heart, as to ſports and proceſſions. On theſe occaſions, the circus rang with the cries of the inflamed rabble, demanding that the Chriſtians ſhould be thrown to the lions. They were delighted with Creſcens the Cynic, for his buffooneries upon the perſecuted, and

(3) Blackall's 4 Sermons at B. L.

and aſſiſted at the martyrdom of Polycarp, with diabolic rage. The gravity of Chriſtianity diſpleaſed them. They were alſo attached to old cuſtoms. How obſtinately, at the reformation, did ſome perſons of all ranks remain wedded to what I am ſure a Deiſt would call ſenſeleſs ſuperſtition?

Theſe conſiderations account throughly for perſons hardening themſelves againſt conviction. Hearing unbelievers on this ſubject, you would ſuppoſe all men to be what it is certain they are not, i. e. lovers of truth, and always ready to agree in what is reaſonable, at the expence of whatever they hold moſt dear. When they would palliate vices, there is a great deal aſcribed to impetuous paſſions; but in this caſe, where all the affections were engaged, they take it for granted that they muſt have been inoperative againſt truth.

SECT. XIV.

HAVING now handled the argument from miracles, I ſhall paſs on to another, which ariſes from the life and manners of the doer of theſe works. The character of Jeſus Chriſt, muſt, in my opinion, be very perplexing to a Deiſt pretending to reflection. What can be more aſtoniſhing, than that he, if not the Meſſiah indeed, ſhould conceive a ſcheme ſuch as that which he adopted, ſo directly the reverſe of what his countrymen cheriſhed? Deſigning men ever lay

their doctrines in the prejudices of the people. All the mock Meſſiahs flattered them with the hopes of temporal deliverance; but Chriſt endeavoured to root prejudices out of their minds. They expected a conqueror, he denied that he was one; they loved traditions, he rejected them; he ſpared neither Phariſees, Sadducees or people; he interpreted the ſcriptures in a manner different from that received among them, and in a way more agreeable to common ſenſe. He practiſed no ridiculous auſterities, which gain ſo much upon the vulgar; at twelve the ſame dignity appears in him, as at thirty; and, what is unparalleled, he knew his office and deſtination at that tender age; yet he never received the lectures of rabbies or philoſophers. Now when we hear a child ſpeak ſomething quite above his years, we conclude that he muſt have received it from a maſter; yet there was no one upon earth from whom our Saviour could imbibe the doctrines which he delivered. It is very ſtrange to hear him teaching with the authority of a Lawgiver, without power in his hands, and eſtabliſhing his commands with ſuch ſanctions, as are fitteſt to work upon the heart of man. He ſpeaks with ſurpriſing aſſurance of the fate of his religion, telling his diſciples that they would be brought before kings and governors for his ſake; that they would be ſcourged, crucified, and perſecuted from city to city; that his goſpel ſhould be preached unto all nations. It was juſt after his diſciples had acknowledged his pretenſions, that he told them he muſt die a ſhameful death. Let an unbeliever lay his hand on his heart, and aſk himſelf whether an impoſtor would damp the ardour of his followers in this manner?

It

(1) It is obſervable that where natural religion left any thing defective, his revelation juſt ſupplies that, but never gratifies one queſtion of mere curioſity, which, however, would have pleaſed the vulgar mightily. Neither did he give into the then prevailing paſſion for ritual obſervances; he makes almoſt the whole of his worſhip to conſiſt in a ſpiritual temper, and inſtituted only two ſimple ceremonies, viz. Baptiſm and the Supper of the Lord. (2) There is in his teaching ſuch a mixture of dignity and condeſcenſion, that illiterate men, like the Evangeliſts, could never have conceived it, without an original to copy after. (3) Take any human invention, for inſtance, Xenophon's Memorables, and compare it with Chriſt's mode of inſtruction. What is he then, when the greateſt light of Paganiſm thus ſhrinks before him? Socrates argues *for* and *againſt*; ſeems rather ſtudious of perplexing others, than of opening truths; uſes ridicule and ſatire; uſes ſeveral ſophiſms which cannot ſtand the teſt; falls in with the errors of Polytheiſm. (4) It is mentioned as a great thing, that he and Xenocrates reformed, each a man, viz. Phœdon and Polemon. Chriſt's images and alluſions are to be found in nature, therefore ever natural; whereas Socrates alludes to the leſs known manners and arts of Athens. The references of the former to a way, to a vine, to corn, to ſheep, and to ſuch circumſtances as a preſent view ſuggeſted, are far more eloquent, when applied to the common people, than the artificial rules of method. He never affects to ſay ſmart things

(1) Seed's Sermons. (2) Prieſtley's Inſtit. vol. 2.
(3) Law's Theory, &c. (4) Origen ag. Celſus.

things, like the Sophiſts, though he never appears to more advantage than upon difficult queſtions, and trying ſituations. The Philoſophers deſpiſed the vulgar, filling their diſcourſes with ſpeculations for the rich and great; whereas the poor had peculiar attention from him. (5) Pythagoras began with impoſing a ſilence of five years upon his diſciples, teaching them, in the mean time, from behind a curtain, that they might not ſee his perſon; but where does Chriſt affect oſtentatious parade? He diſclaimed the office of a judge; he fled from thoſe who would have made him king; he did not innovate in civil affairs; he taught and practiſed obedience to rulers; he courted not the rich, neither Nicodemus, nor the young man who had large poſſeſſions, he ſent him away ſorrowful. In his goſpel will be found ſpecimens of every virtue, piety to God, love to man, a mind free from vanity, from avarice, from ambition, from pleaſure, and a doctrine exempt from all fanaticiſm and perturbation of mind. It is remarkable, that the Jews accuſe Chriſt of no fault, either in their Talmud or elſewhere; neither do any of the Heathen writers, though they mention his puniſhment. The unwillingneſs of a man of Pilate's cruel character, to condemn him, teſtifies his innocence very ſtrongly. In ſhort, let a man feign to himſelf a divine meſſenger, coming to teach men by precept, and example; and aſk in what he could ſurpaſs him. Even Rouſſeau acknowledges that the majeſty of the goſpel aſtoniſhes him, and that its holineſs ſpeaks to his heart. And who was he, who thus exalted and improved the religion of

(5) Jamblichus de vita, &c.

of the Philoſophers, making it the religion of the vulgar? The reputed ſon of a carpenter, who had not where to lay his head, who never invited or allured one follower by temporal hopes, but inſtead thereof, told them, they muſt bear their croſs, and deny themſelves. Many ſages of merit, whom infidels would in their bigotry propoſe as paterns, in preference to Jeſus, attempted partial reformations ineffectually. How comes it then, that this humble, ſuffering, crucified man ſhould be the author of the converſion of ſo many Gentiles, the deſtroyer of ſo much idolatry? The Perſians demoliſhed images; the Jews compaſſed heaven and earth to make a proſelyte; yet neither ever brought over a ſingle kingdom: much leſs would the *fooliſhneſs of preaching*, i. e. the Croſs of Chriſt, if God were not with it. Simon and Doſitheus pretended to be great perſonages; they ſaid it was unneceſſary to ſuffer death for the truth, and that idolatry was indifferent. A perſon would think therefore, that they would get more followers than Jeſus; yet, in the time of Origen, they had thirty only.

There is nothing to oppoſe to theſe undeniable facts. It is eaſy to aſſert obſtinately, that he was ſuperſtitious, an enthuſiaſt, or a deceiver; to make oppoſite characters, never found in the ſame man, unite in him, rather than acknowledge his miſſion; to make him ſuch a compound of prudence and folly, of ignorance and knowledge, of goodneſs and wickedneſs, as never appeared in the world. But wiſe and conſiderate men, who feel that their opinions on this ſubject, may, one day, be attended with very momentous conſequences, will ever ſpurn at ſuch unfounded preſumptions.

SECT.

SECT. XV.

ANOTHER ſplendid evidence for the truth of Chriſtianity ariſes from the conduct of the Apoſtles, and primitive Chriſtians. If an unbeliever would give himſelf time to reflect ſeriouſly, and diveſt himſelf of prejudices, which probably he took up haſtily, at an early period, to quiet his mind, I could almoſt venture to affirm, that he would allow the behaviour of the diſciples to carry in it neither enthuſiaſm or deceit.

Nemo gratis malus, is an old adage founded on obſervations made on human nature. No body of men have, at any time, been ſeen to practiſe a dangerous deceit, without inducements equal at leaſt to the hazard. But unbelievers have never been able to aſſign motives, which could account in any reſpect for the Apoſtles concerting ſuch a ſcheme, and then undergoing ſuch labours and ſufferings in the proſecution of it.

It would be a ſtrange conceit to ſay, they were ambitious of honour. What honour could they expect from being the followers of one condemned by public authority to a ſhameful death? To go through the world preaching up a crucified man, was a certain way of expoſing themſelves to general ſcorn. They muſt have been abſolutely mad, to expect any veneration under this character. Their own writings declare what they had taught themſelves to expect; and what they foreſaw, indeed, what they muſt have foreſeen, happened. Their ſimple doctrines appeared

fooliſhneſs to Greeks, exerciſed in the ſubtleties of a vain philoſophy. We learn from Tacitus, that they were hated by the Romans; and that the Jews perſecuted them from city to city is known to all. To be a good Chriſtian, in the days of the Apoſtles, was to bear infamy and death; to be derided by the incurious as an idiot, and an enemy to the Gods. The obſtinacy of that man is to be pitied, or rather deſpiſed, who will ſay that they looked for glory from ſuch a ſcheme. If we believe with Deiſts, that all their plans were of their own concerting, in ſuch liberty of choice, we may be aſſured, that they would have been very different from the preſent, and that, inſtead of appealing to their works (which if they did none, is moſt abſurd) they would have uſed the declamatory harangues of the ſophiſts. We may be perſuaded that they would not have ſpoken of themſelves in a way ſo ill calculated to give us an exalted idea of their genius and manner of life. (1) Enthuſiaſts or impoſtors never proclaim to the world the weakneſs of their underſtanding, and the defects of their character. Yet the Apoſtles tell us of their prejudices ſcarce ſurmountable, of ſtrifes, of hardneſs of heart. (2) Matthew calls himſelf a Publican, a name of great reproach; none of the reſt call him by that name. When John mentions the diſciple whom Jeſus loved, he does not give his own name. Peter did not tell Mark, who wrote by his direction, the honourable anſwer which Jeſus made concerning him; bu this fall is minutely ſet down. Luke does not mention

(1) Harwood's Letters on Religion. (2) Euſeb. dem. Evan. Lib. 3.

tion the half of Paul's hardſhips, as appears from Paul's own epiſtle, when a recital of them was extorted from him. The Evangeliſts write no encomiums upon each other, or upon their Maſter. It is very remarkable, that throughout the whole New Teſtament, there is no eulogium upon Jeſus Chriſt. They have ſet down plain matters of fact alone. If a man ſhould ſtill continue to think that the Apoſtles coveted honour, I would aſk him what honours could Paul expect: he who deſerted honours, rewards, the diſtribution of dignities, friends and acquaintances, to join himſelf to low ignoble men, to expoſe himſelf to popular odium, to perils of robbers, to work with his own hands, to call himſelf the leaſt of the Apoſtles? He would not be at the head of a party: when ſome of the Corinthians ſaid they were of Paul, he exclaims thus, "Is Chriſt divided?" (3) By aſſociating with the diſciples, he could not hope to advance his temporal intereſt, or gratify any paſſion. If an impoſtor, he would have availed himſelf of his learning above the other Apoſtles; he would have been crying it up; but of all others he makes the leaſt of it. He declares, in his Epiſtle to the Corinthians, that he uſed no eloquence among them, but works. Indeed the converſion of this great Apoſtle muſt for ever involve infidels in inexplicable perplexity. Human ingenuity has not been able to deviſe any improper motive, which, with a ſhadow of reaſon, can be ſaid to have influenced his conduct. If, ſays my Lord Littleton, he forged the ſtory of the viſion, it would never have ſucceeded; for he ſaid it happened in the midſt of the

(3) Lord Littleton on the Converſion, &c.

the meſſengers which accompanied him, which were choſen by the Prieſts, for their great zeal. How could he expect that ſuch a public lie as this could paſs undetected? Could he bribe them all to ſilence againſt their conſcience? Would not the Prieſts have given a much greater bribe for divulging the truth? Would not he himſelf rather have pretended, that he ſaw ſome miracle among the Chriſtians which converted him, for this would put him out of the power of the oppoſite party? The ſolemn and marked appeals made in the face of open day, and of enemies, by one whoſe unqueſtionable worldly intereſt it was to think otherwiſe, is, by itſelf, a ſtriking argument for the truth of Chriſtianity. If, indeed, Jeſus Chriſt and his Apoſtles, had, like Mahomet and his followers, founded a mighty empire, the charge of ambition might then be made with juſtice: for it is evident that they acted in this manner, uſing revelation as a ladder to mount to thrones; whereas the Apoſtles, without attempting any innovation, charge men to be obedient to the ruling powers. (4) Socrates *might* look for glory from men by his death: though it muſt be confeſſed this ſuppoſition is very improbable; but could the half of the firſt Chriſtians expect this, who were of the loweſt order of artizans, women and children, boys and girls? To a ſagacious inquirer God has diſcriminated their caſe from that of all others.

If the Apoſtles had ſiniſter views of any kind, from their embarraſſments they would have had diviſions, and ſome would have ſet up for themſelves; whereas they all wrought to the ſame end.

When

(4) Grotius de Verit.

When a number of villains undertake any thing among us, ſome of them never fail to betray the reſt, in an hour of danger. From this characteriſtic of human nature, it follows moſt undeniably, that avarice was not their motive. If it were, ſome of them would have recanted; becauſe the Jews, who took ſuch pains to extirpate them, would have given a great ſum. They who gave large money to the ſoldiers would gladly have given impunity and rewards to one or more of the diſciples. Beſides, it muſt be obvious to any man who conſiders their ſituation, and who is not reſolutely determined to believe any thing rather than the Chriſtian religion, that they could not expect to make any profit from their ſtory equal to their own trades and profeſſions, and that if ſet on by gain, they would not have inſtituted an order of Deacons to diſtribute alms, that they might give themſelves wholly to the miniſtry of the word. There is another conſideration which cannot fail of ſuggeſting itſelf to a reflecting mind; it is this, "The diſciples ſeparated, and preached, each in different countries." Now, I ſay that if they had been actuated by lucre, they muſt have varied with circumſtances in various parts; they muſt have temporized, and given up ſome points in ſome places; yet nothing is more certain in hiſtory, than that all the churches had the ſame faith. How ſoon did the firſt reformers, though they had one common cauſe and intereſt, differ in their ſpeculations!

Had the diſciples been carrying on an impoſture, it is likely that, inſtead of rejecting Simon Magus, they would have conſidered him as a very valuable acquiſition; but it is probable in

the very higheſt degree, that as they were Jews, believing in the divinity of the Moſaic Law, ſome out of ſo many followers would have been ſeized with remorſe, and would have diſcovered all. It muſt confirm us exceedingly in our faith, to ſee none of that irreſolution among the firſt Chriſtians, which perſons, ſenſible of the weakneſs of a cauſe, muſt have had. (5) Ten years ſeparation from communion was required from Apoſtates. The great voluntary zeal, and charity ſhewn by theſe firſt converts, is alſo an illuſtrious proof of their ſtrong conviction that there was no deceit practiſed upon them. We have (6) Lucian and (7) Julian vouching for this zeal and charity. "It is incredible, ſays the former of thoſe writers, with what alacrity thoſe people, i. e. the Chriſtians, defend the common cauſe;" and the latter confeſſes, that they ſupported their own and the Heathen poor.

It is a great argument for the integrity of the Apoſtles, that they never were charged with any particular crime, by the firſt oppoſers of their religion. If any flaw had appeared in their reputation, it could not have eſcaped the ſatiric eye of Lucian, who took ſuch uncommon pleaſure in holding up the dark ſide of characters. It would be mere obſtinacy to ſay, that he who flouriſhed in the ſecond century, when this religion was every where diffuſed, would not have preferred aſſaulting its firſt teachers, rather than Alexander of Pontus, Peregrinus, and ſuch obſcure individuals. The ſilence of this ſcoffer at all piety, when he treats profeſſedly of ſects and religious

(5) Bingham's Antiquities, &c. (6) De Morte Peregrini. (7) Epiſtola ad Arſaciam.

religious impoſtures, muſt ever weigh mightily with reaſoning men. It is remarkable too, that the objections of Celſus are brought chiefly from the Evangeliſts, by perverting their meaning, which ſhews that they inſerted every thing which could make againſt them. This philoſopher who lived near their times, could advance nothing new. We who live at this day can judge of their great candour, and freedom from paſſion. In reading the four Evangeliſts, we do not meet with any invectives againſt their moſt bitter enemies. They do not ſay a word of that monſter Herod by way of abuſe, though he ſought after the child Jeſus ſo much.

Such an attempt as that of the reformation of mankind could not be thought on by weak or wicked men. This argument will derive much additional force in ſuch as are acquainted with the goſpel-plan of redemption, juſtification and mediation; for the whole evangelical ſcheme is of ſuch admirable contrivance, harmonizing the attributes of God, that the mind is ſeized with ſacred wonder, as if it looked down from the battlements of heaven. You might as well ſay, that a child could blow out the ſun, as that fiſhermen could project ſuch a plan.

If we wanted more proofs, is not the ſingle circumſtance of Judas Iſcariot hanging himſelf, ſufficient to ſhew that Chriſt or his Apoſtles had no impoſture on foot? If they had, he would have gloried in his diſcovery, inſtead of being ſtruck with remorſe; nay, to juſtify himſelf, he was bound to blacken his character. I conſider the conduct of this man as another ſtriking evidence for the truth of our religion. He ſeems to have followed Jeſus at firſt, from the popular

expectation of temporal honours; but when diſappointed, and even reproved by our Lord, his covetous deſires prompted him to treaſon. His ſubſequent behaviour would incline us to think, that he believed his maſter would reſcue himſelf again, as he had been ſeen to do before. He hoped to gain the reward, without any bad conſequence following from it. It is very pleaſing to obſerve, that when St. Matthew relates this ſtory, he at the ſame time mentions a ſtanding monument of its truth, viz. that with this money the prieſts purchaſed a field at Jeruſalem to bury ſtrangers in, called, from the circumſtances of the fact, the field of blood. He who would ſay that the ſtory might be a fiction (for Deiſts deal much in *might be* arguments) is ſilenced by this, ſeeing that no impoſtor would wantonly mention a notorious fact, which, if falſe, muſt be known to all the dwellers at Jeruſalem, i. e. to the perſons whom he was labouring to convert.

The mention of facts leads me to another proof that the Apoſtles were no impoſtors. My Lord Bolingbroke allows, that the Chriſtian religion is built on facts. Now I ſay, that public miraraculous facts would, laſt of all things, be recurred to by deceivers as motives for converſion; becauſe this would be to avow fraud in the very firſt inſtance, while their whole ſucceſs muſt be ſuppoſed to depend on concealing it. But if the facts alluded to by the Diſciples were groundleſs, this muſt be known to all; for in their writings to their firſt converts, they do not repreſent them as done ſecretly, or at one place, but as done publicly, throughout every place in Judea, and in the moſt celebrated cities of Europe and Aſia. The common facts of the goſpel were alſo pub-

lic,

lic; the birth, preaching, and death of John, coming of the Magi, Herod's enquiry at the Sanhedrim, murder of the infants, gift of tongues, Jeſus's public diſputation with the Rabbies, the darkneſs at mid-day, the perſecution of the Apoſtles, their diſperſion through the empire, the propagation of their religion. This is the hiſtory of the goſpel. They who embraced the faith, at the expence of their lives and characters, muſt have known whether theſe aſſeverations were true or falſe; and if they knew them to be falſe, then all the ingenuity of ſophiſtry can find no cauſe for men's becoming Chriſtians at firſt, and continuing afterwards in ſuch a dangerous profeſſion, when it gratified no worldly luſt, or paſſion of the mind. This unwearied perſeverance in the immediate followers of Chriſt, always at the imminent hazard, and ſometimes with a certainty of loſing property and life, is, of itſelf, an undeniable evidence, that they were perſuaded their religion was true. Their conduct is evidently that of men acting from irreſiſtible conviction; for it required great reſolution, even ſuppoſing the facts to be true; but ſuppoſing them not to be true, their perſiſting is perfectly unnatural. Such reaſoning is utterly ſubverſive of all principles upon which human nature proceeds. It is well known that the ſcholars of Socrates, though they entertained a profound reverence for their maſter's tenets, ſhrunk from a manly and open avowal of his doctrines, to ſave their lives. They did not boldly enter the Areopagus, as the the Apoſtles did into the Sanhedrim, when they told the very court which condemned Jeſus, that there was no ſalvation through any other name; yet when Peter ſpoke this, he knew he was to

die

die for that doctrine; nay, he had the very manner of his death revealed to him.

I have often imagined, that it was matter of wonder to the primitive Chriſtians, why God ſuffered them to be expoſed ſo long to daily and hourly perils; but we who live at this day ſee that it was deſigned for the conviction of poſterity, who, judging from the nature of the human conſtitution, muſt be perſuaded that great multitudes of people, many of them coeval with the facts, many living while the remembrance of them was freſh, would never ſubmit to ignominy and death, unleſs convinced of their truth. Common ſenſe revolts at the idea of their involving themſelves and others in gratuitous miſery. (8) In matters of ſpeculation men may be deceived, not having abilities or leiſure to ſee the ſophiſtry, but it is not ſo in matters of fact; here the vulgar and great are on a level. It alſo teaches poſterity another leſſon, that this religion could neither be prieſt-craft nor ſtate-craft; for in every perſecution, the biſhops and prieſts fell victims firſt, and all ſtates haraſſed it for three hundred years. The Chriſtians were perſecuted from the very beginning; ſeveral perſecutions are mentioned in the Acts of the Apoſtles; and the candour of the writer appears ſtrong in recording circumſtances, which would make ſome apoſtatize, and keep others back from embracing the faith. He muſt naturally have wiſhed to repreſent the dangers attending the profeſſion as trifling. But what ſays John in the Revelations? "I ſaw a great number ſlain for the teſtimony of Jeſus." This was bad encouragement for converts.

(8) Seed's Sermons.

verts. (9) Could the Apoſtles invent ſuch predictions as theſe, which, if they had not been accompliſhed, would have deſtroyed their claims, and which could not be accompliſhed but by their being conſtantly perſecuted, and led to death?

In the Apoſtolic age, a direful and deleterious perſecution raged againſt the Chriſtians, in the metropolis of the empire. We have the accounts of this from Tacitus, who affirms that immenſe multitudes ſuffered (*ingens multitudo,*) which Voltaire, in the true ſpirit of infidelity, tranſlates a *few wretches.* The Roman hiſtorian deſcends into particulars, as how ſome of them in the ſkins of beaſts were torn by dogs; ſome covered with inflammable matter, and made to ſerve as torches by night. I believe a Deiſt will not deny this; and yet I am almoſt perſuaded, that had Lactantius or Euſebius recited what Tacitus has recited, Mr. Gibbon would have made ſome ſuch reflection as this upon the narration: but here we muſt make large and liberal allowance for the pompous declamation of the Cicero of the fathers; and for the intemperate, and perhaps fraudulent zeal of the Cæſarean prelate. This would have paſſed among unbelievers, for an obſervation founded on enlarged views, and uncommon ſuperiority of ſoul. Some time after the age of Nero, Celſus, the enemy of the faith, deſcribes the general ſituation of the Chriſtians, in theſe words, (10) "Ye have not an inch of ground, or a corner of a houſe; if two or three of you are found wandering about, or hiding yourſelves, a moſt diligent ſearch is made for you,

(9) Sillen on Religion. (10) Origen ad Cel. Lib. 8.

you, to drag you to puniſhment." If we except a few lucid intervals, this may ſtand for a deſcription of the ſtate of the church, till ſhe found refuge under Conſtantine, whoſe converſion ſome unbelievers have aſcribed to the obſerved prevailing power of the Chriſtians. Now, that during this long and melancholy period, ſo many ſhould embrace this profeſſion, is the ſtrongeſt proof that they had the very higheſt aſſurance of its certainty; an aſſurance ſo great, that though they were not required to retract their teſtimony, but only to be ſilent in future, they would not comply to ſave their lives. The philoſophers promiſed a happy life and elyſium, but they never got any to die for their belief: their darling tenets did not operate ſo ſtrongly on themſelves. (11) Fear induced Plato to deliver himſelf ambiguouſly, and Ariſtotle, on the rumour of a perſecution, fled from Athens, leaving his philoſophy to ſhift for itſelf.

As to the charge of enthuſiaſm, I believe that the reading of the New Teſtament will for ever give the lie to that. We muſt judge of the Apoſtles from their writings, as we do of other authors. An examiner will find, that they were neither hot, credulous, ſelf-conceited, or melancholy; all of which my Lord Littleton reckons up as unerring marks of this foible. Let an infidel ſuppoſe to himſelf twelve fiſhermen and publicans going forth, in a paroxyſm of enthuſiaſm, commencing teachers of religion, and treating of abſtruſe points, relating to a Deity, providence, and the important obligations of morality; what nonſenſe would they not have broached? How can he conſiſtently acknowledge, (which however he muſt

(11) Origen ad Celſum.

muſt do,) that thoſe perſons have come ſo much nearer a ſyſtem of rational Deiſm than the aggregate of old philoſophers? If they had iſſued forth in a paroxyſm of fanaticiſm, would not their followers have cooled when the leaders were cut off, inſtead of bearing their teſtimony unfainting for three hundred years? If they were ſo frantic as to believe, that the wonderful things recorded by them in the goſpel were done before their eyes, and that they had the gift of tongues, will a man obſtinately tell us that this *might* gain credit with others? I know it would gain no credit now; and yet human nature is always the ſame. The inducements which lead men to form improper judgments lay wholly againſt Chriſtianity. In ſhort, a man who rejects the Apoſtles, muſt believe *that* a few of the loweſt of the Jewiſh nation had finer notions of the Deity, than all the reſt of the world, and did more good than the philoſophers, by turning millions to the worſhip of one God; *that* thoſe men were ſo forgetful of themſelves, ſo phrenetic, that they expoſed themſelves to death for theſe lies; or if he ſuppoſes them to be mad, (for this is the action of madmen,) then madmen taught the duties of civil life, and the worſhip of the Deity, better than the whole world.

It may not be amiſs, before we leave this ſubject, to conſider an infidel paradox, by which they endeavour to elude the unanſwerable argument drawn from the patient ſufferings of the firſt propagators of Chriſtianity. Unable to make any other reply, they have boldly declared, that their ſuffering is no proof, and that perſecution would ſpread a religion. This to an unprejudiced man, muſt appear to be as abſurd a declaration

ration as ever was made, for love of life and abhorrence of pain are univerſal paſſions. Joſephus well obſerves, that no Heathen would die for any of their moſt eſteemed books or laws. The only circumſtance, therefore, which can ſeem to give a colour of reaſon to this idle aſſertion, is, that ſince the promulgation of the Chriſtian religion, and its diviſion into ſects, individuals have been found in each ſect who laid down their lives rather than their opinions. For inſtance, Proteſtants and Romaniſts have died, each for their reſpective tenets, i. e. each died for what he looked on to be the true religion of the Apoſtles; but there was no man who died at any time for an opinion, thinking it falſe. (12) They muſt find out ſome hiſtory yet unknown, to ſhew where men refuſed to retract what they knew to be a fiction, when by ſo doing, they might have ſaved their lives, though fear has often made men abjure what was true. Now if this be granted, (and it cannot be denied,) that thoſe perſons thought the religion for which they ſuffered was the true one, how will their deaths ſerve a Deiſt? For if the firſt Chriſtians thought the ground of their profeſſion true, they could not be deceived. If divers men, in divers countries, thought they ſaw the ſick reſtored, and felt that they had the gift of tongues, and the power of working miracles, they could not be impoſed on. Men may eaſily run into ſpeculative errors, but in matters of fact, the law of our nature will not ſuffer us to be miſled: ſo that if the Apoſtles, and their followers, believed the Chriſtian religion to be true, it muſt have been true. There cannot be a ſingle inſtance adduced of

(12) Seed's Sermons.

of a Mahometan dying for his religion, while in its infancy; which was the time to be aſſured of its truth. I am certain that many of them would die for it now; but that would prove nothing. This would be the effect of certain external circumſtances, ariſing from prejudices of education, which gave a bias to his mind; whereas the firſt Chriſtians had all been brought up in prejudices, entirely oppoſite to this ſyſtem. Beſides, when men compare the caſes of thoſe who ſuffered martyrdom for the cauſe of error, or ſome frenzy of the mind, with the caſe of the firſt Chriſtians, they will not find them at all parallel. (13) For of the former caſes, very few inſtances can be adduced, and then only of ſingle perſons, or at leaſt, of a ſmall number; or if any ſudden guſt of paſſion produced enthuſiaſm in any, it was but momentary, and was ever quaſhed, when the heads and leaders were taken off, who were perſons whoſe doctrines and writings inſpire contempt. But will any man, at all acquainted with eccleſiaſtical antiquity, ſay, that this was the caſe with the Chriſtians? No, their fortitude was placid and determined; for three hundred years equal and conſtant: not in a few who might be naturally unfeeling, but in an infinite number of every age and condition, boys and girls, old men and youths, noble and ignoble, wiſe and ignorant. Pliny wrote to Trajan, to know how he ſhould conduct himſelf, the number of martyrs was ſo great. For accounts of the horrid and unheard of tortures undergone by all thoſe, read Tacitus, An. Lib. 15. Euſeb. Ec. Hiſt, Lib. 8. and the elegant treatiſe of Lactantius *de mortibus perſecutorum.* (14) A ſudden fanatical impulſe

(13) Addiſon's Evid. (14) Hook's Principia, vol. 2.

impulſe is ſoon allayed; but is it at all likely, that if ſome laid down their lives for ridiculous whims, that the ſame frenzy would ſeize upon men in every country, ſeparated by language, morals and religion? Let a man conſider with himſelf, how much the love of fame, honour and life affects us; how we fear ignominy and torments; and let him aſk himſelf, whether men, whoſe writings ſhew good ſenſe, would reſiſt theſe natural propenſities; particularly if their reaſon told them, that they had no foundation for ſuch conduct, which, by the Deiſtical ſcheme, it muſt have done? If this be natural, it is natural for a man to be mad, to reſiſt paſſions and reaſon together. Let him farther conſider, that it is credulity and love of eaſe which lead men into religious errors; but both of theſe were employed by means of the perſecutions againſt the goſpel: no man would take it upon truſt, and it was what men could judge of, being built on facts, not on ſpeculative opinions. When either in the middle ages, or in modern times, perſons have ſuffered for their different ſects, they died for what they looked upon as the religion of ancient times; but the firſt Chriſtians died for what they knew was contrary to the religion of their forefathers, and therefore would have had conſcience againſt them, had they not been fully and irreſiſtibly convinced.

It is not eaſy to find inſtances of martyrdom ſuffered for errors in the firſt days of the church. Mr. Gibbon indeed affirms, that the Gnoſtics had their martyrs, for which he quotes Euſebius, Ec. Hiſt. Lib. 4. Now, all that Euſebius ſays on that head, in the paſſage referred to, is, that when great numbers were put to death, *one* Metrodorus, a preſ-

a preſbyter, ſuffered among the reſt, who was *ſuppoſed* to be a Marcionite, i. e. a corrupt ſort of Chriſtian. He knew that his Deiſtical readers, for whoſe uſe he inſerted the obſervation, are not over aſſiduous in conſulting references, otherwiſe I muſt ſuppoſe he would have omitted this one, (15) for he is very tender of his credit as an hiſtorian, of his reputation as a ſcholar, and of his honour and veracity as a gentleman.

It will not do much honour to his veracity, that he has repreſented the caſe of Cyprian, that celebrated biſhop, and the motives for his ſubmitting to martyrdom, as a criterion whereby to form an eſtimate of the caſes of the other martyrs. To inſinuate that a majority of the ſufferers were circumſtanced like Cyprian, upon whom the eyes of multitudes were turned, is ſo openly repugnant to truth, that it would be loſing time to confute it.

But it appears from the conduct of infidels, that they do not really believe in their fooliſh pretext, that perſecution ſpread Chriſtianity; becauſe they endeavour by every ſiniſter art to diminiſh the number of the ſufferers. For inſtance, if one of the fathers, as Origen, alluding to his own time and country, ſays, that few ſuffered then, comparatively ſpeaking, this is brought as a general proof, that few ſuffered in any time or in any country; whatever Tacitus, or Pliny, or he himſelf may have uttered to the contrary. Whoever wiſhes to ſee this ſubject impartially ſtated, may read the preliminary diſſertation of Ruinart's Acta Martyrum Sincera. It is true, that Juſtin Martyr acknowledges, that perſecution was the cauſe of his converſion; but how? Certainly

(15) Gibbon's Vindication.

Certainly not in a way that will ſerve the cauſe of unbelievers, but in a way that will cover them with confuſion. For he ſays, that when he ſaw the followers of Jeſus ſuffering with ſuch intrepidity, it induced him to attend to them, and his converſion was the conſequence. (16) I thought, ſays he, "that it was not poſſible for ſuch perſons to wallow in vice and ſenſuality; it being the intereſt of the wicked and voluptuous to avoid death, to diſſemble with princes and magiſtrates to ſave their ſkin." That perſecution may have ſerved Chriſtianity, in this way, we allow; but that it was alſo of amazing prejudice to the Chriſtian cauſe, we have the teſtimony of friends and enemies, ſupported by the known propenſities of human nature. We learn from the Acts of the Apoſtles, that the ſeverity of the perſecution made many Jews diſſemble the inward conviction of their minds. From the diſputes with the Novatians, about the lapſed, and from the ancient eccleſiaſtical canons, we learn, that numbers fell away in every perſecution. Pliny, in his letter to Trajan, ſays, that in conſequence of the perſecution, the Heathen temples began to be frequented; whereas, if the Deiſtical maxim was true, they ſhould have been more deſerted than ever. Julian is far from imputing thegrowth of Chriſtianity to ſo abſurd a cauſe. He attributes it to the ſanctity of the lives of its profeſſors. This was the moſt plauſible pretext which an inſidious enemy could find out in his day. A religion may flouriſh by its intrinſic evidence, in ſpite of perſecution;. but if it ſhould have no other cauſe for its promotion, then it ſeems, that racks, and fagots, and fire are perſuative arguments. It is very ſtrange, that no legiſlators have ever thought of

(16) Apologia Prima.

of propagating favourite opinions by ſuch methods. Our Free-thinkers ſhould make an experiment of their maxim, by ſending over twelve of their Diſciples to ſome country where the inquiſition is eſtabliſhed; of courſe they would be perſecuted, and then by their rule, their opinions would ſpread apace. But I believe that every ſober man is well convinced, that no ſuch conſequence would follow; but that after the twelve had made an *auto de fe*, others would love their lives too well to imitate their example. Perſecution may ſometimes make a man embarked in, and convinced of the truth of a cauſe, more perſevering, becauſe then he looks upon himſelf as a martyr for his God; but to ſay that his martyrdom alone would bring over others, is the moſt extravagant aſſertion that can be ſtruck out of a paradoxical imagination. If this paradox held good, then it was moſt unfortunate, that the Jews loſt the power of puniſhing capitally, juſt about the time of the preaching of the goſpel; yet this has always been conſidered as a remarkable interpoſition of Providence, that their rancour might not rend in pieces the infant church. If it held good, Mahomet's conqueſts ſhould have ſpread Chriſtianity, whereas they annihilated it in ſome Eaſtern parts, agreeably to the prediction of the prophet of God, who declared to ſome of the Aſiatic churches, that their candleſticks, i. e. the goſpel which held up before them the light, ſhould be removed out of its place for their ſins. Theodoſius perſecuted Paganiſm with ſignal ſucceſs. The poor Proteſtants, in the valies of Piedmont, did not grow by perſecution; they were anihilated; ſo were the Lollards in England. When the inquiſition was ſet

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up in Spain, Portugal, and Italy, it ſtopped the progreſs of the reformed religion. When the Emperor of Japan raiſed a perſecution againſt the Jeſuit Chriſtians, they were extirpated immediately. When the Lieutenant of the Police in Paris got orders to ſeize the enthuſiaſtic part of the Janſeniſts, they ſoon confeſſed that their convulſions were counterfeit. The Romaniſts in Ireland are melting away inſenſibly; for the religion of the ſtate will ever gain over converts, unleſs very powerful conviction weighs againſt it. How long did a member of the Chriſtian church keep the reſt in chains, by holding the ſword of perſecution over their heads? Now, if it were true, that perſecution ſpread a religion, the reverſe ſhould have happened in all the above-mentioned caſes. But fear ever did, and ever will make men diſſemble; and the Apoſtles ſtand a ſolitary inſtance againſt the truth of the obſervation. (17) How many of the firſt Reformers prevaricated, through a dread of the civil powers, and waited for favourable opportunities of declaring their ſentiments. Cranmer ſaid maſs under the tyrant Henry, long after he was convinced of its inefficacy. I hope I have ſaid enough to expoſe an aſſertion which expoſes itſelf; and ſhall only add, that if none of the firſt Chriſtians had ſuffered death, it would have been often ſaid before this time, that if the heads had been taken off ſome of the leading men among them, Chriſtianity would have been quaſhed in its commencement, and that it grew, merely becauſe it was neglected.

SECT.

(17) Vide Hiſtoire de Variations, &c.

SECT. XVI.

WE have already ſeen from Tacitus, that there was an immenſe multitude of Chriſtians in Rome, during the apoſtolic age. This is very ſurprizing, when we conſider the diſtance of Rome from Jeruſalem, the mother church. Immediately after this period, we learn from Pliny, governor of Bythinia, that the Chriſtian faith overran his province, which lies thouſands of miles eaſt of Rome. (1) Tertullian boaſts, that it was ſpread throughout the empire, and (2) Juſtin, that ſome of all nations had acknowledged it. The Apoſtles penetrated farther than the Roman arms, even to the Coaſts of Malabar. The Chriſtians of St. Thomas were famous in the days of Jerome, and the Portugueſe found fourteen hundred churches on the hither peninſula of India. Gibbon himſelf is forced to allow its early and wide diffuſion, though if he can at any time find a particular church or diſtrict, where the Chriſtians were few in number, this is ſet in ſuch a light as if he wanted you to draw a general concluſion from it.

The fact of its univerſal propagation being therefore undeniable, it remains with us to inquire, what ſort of perſons were brought over to the faith; and for this we happily have the teſtimony of Pliny. For though no unbeliever will doubt of a hiſtory written by a lawyer or phyſician, concerning their own profeſſions, or of a hiſtory written by a Frenchman about the

(1) Apologia. (2) Dial. cum Trypho.

affairs of his own country (particularly if thoſe perſons wrote among enemies without detection), yet they inconſiſtently enough refuſe belief to a Chriſtian or a Jew, writing upon ſimilar ſubjects. We have then Pliny, the Heathen governor, as a voucher, that perſons of every rank, *omnis ordinis*, had embraced the goſpel. Arnobius calls upon the nations, to ſee how many great orators, grammarians, rulers, lawyers, phyſicians and philoſophers had taken upon themſelves the yoke of Chriſt. After all this, a Deiſt will try to perſuade himſelf and others, that the firſt Chriſtians muſt have been obſcure and ignorant creatures, in defiance of the direct teſtimony of an enemy. (3) In leſs than forty years after the paſſion, many of the prieſts believed, with Joſeph, Nicodemus, Saul, Apollos, Dionyſius the Areopagite, Polycarp, Ignatius, Ireneus, Ariſtides, Theophilus, Tatian, Pantænus, Clement, Juſtin, Sergius Paulus, and Flavius Clemens the Roman Conſul, for which Domitian put him to death, though he was his couſin. The writings of many of theſe are ſtill extant, as monuments of their genius and learning.

Now let a man conſider the nature of the doctrines received, the condition of receivers and propagators, the manner of propagation, and the perilous ſituation of the converts: amidſt ſuch impediments, he will be compelled to acknowledge the hand of God in its wide and univerſal diffuſion, and that from hence a new argument is derived for the divinity of the Chriſtian religion. What was the nature of the doctrines it inculcated? (4) It began againſt *ex nihilo nil fit*, a favourite

(3) Edward's Survey. (4) Biſhop Kidder's Demon. &c.

a favourite maxim of the Pagans; that there was but one God, whereas they had many; that there was a reſurrection; that there was a crucified Lord to be worſhipped, whom neither they nor their anceſtors had heard of; whom the philoſophers hated, becauſe every ſect had ſome tenets oppoſite to his. Then its precepts were in no way gratifying to fleſh and blood. As to its rewards, there were no promiſes of proſperity in this world, no ſenſual gratifications in the next. It offered no riches to the covetous, no voluptuouſneſs to the Epicureans, no honours to the ambitious; but only an unſeen reverſion in another life. If therefore Chriſtianity were falſe, it would be abſolutely unaccountable, why ſo many men of parts embraced it, though it be not at all wonderful that men ſhould be againſt it; they having ſuch violent intereſts to be unbelievers from paſſions, prejudices and pleaſures. If Chriſtianity were falſe, it would be as unaccountable why the vulgar embraced it, who are ſo mightily attached to old ſuperſtitions. There is no poſſibility of converting them by mere argument, particularly when they have a religion agreeable to their propenſities. See how they love bull-baiting, cock-fighting, horſe-racing, ſhews, &c. at this day. I believe that no ſet of poor, friendleſs, unconnected foreigners could, by mere reaſoning, induce them to abandon ſuch; and if the ſports were given and ſanctioned by the ruling powers, the idea is perfectly chimerical. The vulgar depend much upon the great. Hume thought he was doing wonders againſt the goſpel, in the firſt volume of his Engliſh hiſtory, when he repreſented the people as veering about to and from Chriſtianity with their kings. Whereas in truth, he is

affairs of his own country (particularly if thoſe perſons wrote among enemies without detection), yet they inconſiſtently enough refuſe belief to a Chriſtian or a Jew, writing upon ſimilar ſubjects. We have then Pliny, the Heathen governor, as a voucher, that perſons of every rank, *omnis ordinis*, had embraced the goſpel. Arnobius calls upon the nations, to ſee how many great orators, grammarians, rulers, lawyers, phyſicians and philoſophers had taken upon themſelves the yoke of Chriſt. After all this, a Deiſt will try to perſuade himſelf and others, that the firſt Chriſtians muſt have been obſcure and ignorant creatures, in defiance of the direct teſtimony of an enemy. (3) In leſs than forty years after the paſſion, many of the prieſts believed, with Joſeph, Nicodemus, Saul, Apollos, Dionyſius the Areopagite, Polycarp, Ignatius, Ireneus, Ariſtides, Theophilus, Tatian, Pantænus, Clement, Juſtin, Sergius Paulus, and Flavius Clemens the Roman Conſul, for which Domitian put him to death, though he was his couſin. The writings of many of theſe are ſtill extant, as monuments of their genius and learning.

Now let a man conſider the nature of the doctrines received, the condition of receivers and propagators, the manner of propagation, and the perilous ſituation of the converts: amidſt ſuch impediments, he will be compelled to acknowledge the hand of God in its wide and univerſal diffuſion, and that from hence a new argument is derived for the divinity of the Chriſtian religion. What was the nature of the doctrines it inculcated? (4) It began againſt *ex nihilo nil fit*, a favourite

(3) Edward's Survey. (4) Biſhop Kidder's Demon. &c.

a favourite maxim of the Pagans; that there was but one God, whereas they had many; that there was a reſurrection; that there was a crucified Lord to be worſhipped, whom neither they nor their anceſtors had heard of; whom the philoſophers hated, becauſe every ſect had ſome tenets oppoſite to his. Then its precepts were in no way gratifying to fleſh and blood. As to its rewards, there were no promiſes of proſperity in this world, no ſenſual gratifications in the next. It offered no riches to the covetous, no voluptuouſneſs to the Epicureans, no honours to the ambitious; but only an unſeen reverſion in another life. If therefore Chriſtianity were falſe, it would be abſolutely unaccountable, why ſo many men of parts embraced it, though it be not at all wonderful that men ſhould be againſt it; they having ſuch violent intereſts to be unbelievers from paſſions, prejudices and pleaſures. If Chriſtianity were falſe, it would be as unaccountable why the vulgar embraced it, who are ſo mightily attached to old ſuperſtitions. There is no poſſibility of converting them by mere argument, particularly when they have a religion agreeable to their propenſities. See how they love bull-baiting, cock-fighting, horſe-racing, ſhews, &c. at this day. I believe that no ſet of poor, friendleſs, unconnected foreigners could, by mere reaſoning, induce them to abandon ſuch; and if the ſports were given and ſanctioned by the ruling powers, the idea is perfectly chimerical. The vulgar depend much upon the great. Hume thought he was doing wonders againſt the goſpel, in the firſt volume of his Engliſh hiſtory, when he repreſented the people as veering about to and from Chriſtianity with their kings. Whereas in truth, he is

arguing for it, becauſe the converts of the ages near the ſource, were not influenced by their rulers at all. There were, as I may ſay, two converſions of the world to Chriſtianity, one under the Roman emperors, the other under the Barbarians of the North. In this latter, many nations were converted by force; we build nothing upon it, and ſhall only obſerve, that it is another inſtance of the falſehood of that aſſertion, that perſecution ſpreads a religion.

Having ſhewn that neither the doctrines nor ſituation of the firſt converts were favourable to the growth of this religion, I ſhall now ſhew that the ſtate of its Author and his Diſciples was as unpropitious. For who was its firſt preacher? The reputed ſon of a carpenter, born in a ſtable, and crucified among thieves. Who were his Diſciples? No princes of ancient blood; no ſelect orators of Greece and Rome; no great captains; they were ſimple unlearned fiſhermen. Could they grapple with the wiſdom of the Greeks, the power of the Romans, and the malice of the Jews? Could they conquer without arms, and perſuade without rhetoric? You might as well ſay, that a few ſhepherds could vanquiſh Hannibal, or a few children drive before them the Roman legions: they had no girdle but truth, no breaſt-plate but righteouſneſs, no ſhield but faith, no ſword but the ſpirit and the word of God; yet with this armour they overcame mighty kingdoms, caſt down imaginations, and every high thing that exalted itſelf above the knowledge of God. In carrying on this work, they owed nothing to the magiſtrate; it was not obtruded by imperial decrees, nor inſtilled early into the tender mind: no, it called men off from what

they

they had imbibed with their milk; (5) from what was thought to have exalted Rome ſo high; from what had almoſt the univerſal conſent of the world. (6) It was propagated from nation to nation, which was much more difficult than if from father to ſon, for here were new prejudices to be conſtantly ſurmounted. (7) It was introduced all at once, ſo that the ſhock was as great as poſſible to mens former thoughts and cuſtoms. If its ſeveral doctrines had crept in by degrees, the argument would have loſt much of its force. It was planted in weakneſs and diſgrace; in perſecution and affliction; in tears and prayers. It was watered with the blood of the martyrs. The Roman empire laid the axe to its root, to cut it down; but it grew more luxuriant, flouriſhed prodigiouſly, and ſpread its branches wider.

Truth has often prevailed againſt power and intereſt; but there is no inſtance of truth, power, and intereſt being foiled. Though Hume's argument from experience has no weight againſt miracles, (becauſe there we are not thoroughly verſed in the nature of the operator, ſo as to ſay what he may, or may not do, and therefore never have ſufficient experience to pronounce any thing dogmatically), yet when we ſpeak of human nature, with whoſe workings and limits we are ſo intimately acquainted, and when it has paſſed into a proverb *that it is always the ſame*, his argument acts with ſome energy; it is reſiſtleſs, if you admit his principle, that univerſal experience amounts to a proof.

The conqueſts of Mahomet are the ſubterfuge commonly reſorted to by Infidels againſt the ſurpriſing

(5) Vide St. Auſtin de civit. Dei. (6) Limborch's Amica Coll. (7) M'Night's Converſion, &c.

priſing propagation of the goſpel. They might as well recur to the rapid and extenſive victories of Alexander, or Ghengis-khan. For who is ſo ignorant of hiſtory as to believe, that there is any parallel between the propagation of Mahometaniſm and Chriſtianity? The methods uſed were diametrically oppoſite; the former being ſpread by the ſword, the latter againſt it. The Mahometan religion never extended a league farther than the Mahometan ſabre; but when Peter cut off the ſervant's ear, he was commanded to lay up the ſword, and it never was drawn afterwards, till the empire became Chriſtian. This implicit ſubmiſſion in ſo numerous a body, during the terrible perſecutions of Decius and Diocletian, muſt aſtoniſh any inquiſitive man. He muſt wonder why they did not unite for their common defence, like the Proteſtants, when they formed the Smalkaldic league. We muſt impute a conduct ſo extraordinary to an overruling Providence, which rejected all interpoſition of human power, when it laid the foundations of the church. When Chriſt or his Apoſtles came to a village, a man was at liberty to attend to them or not; but when Mahomet came to a town, it was not ſo; he compelled them to receive him. It would be impoſſible to ſhew where he ever made any inward converſion of the minds of men, or that his immediate followers ever made a convert in dominions where they and their profeſſion were perſecuted. He ran no other danger in ſpreading his doctrine than any other conqueror, and is no otherwiſe the founder of a ſect, than as it led him to found an empire which he left to his ſucceſſors. He became one of the richeſt citizens in Mecca, by marrying Kadijah, the widow of his

his employer. He multiplied wives, concubines, and ſlaves. They were the firſt who acknowledged his miſſion, either through fear, or as ſome will have it, from his impoſing fits of the falling ſickneſs, for trances and communications with Gabriel. (8) He ſpent three years in the converſion of fourteen proſelytes, and their faith even in this world was rewarded with riches and honours, with the command of armies, and the government of kingdoms. He then gave out in what manner he intended propagating his faith, and the advantages to be acquired from following his ſtandard. (9) Three hundred and nineteen men joined him; his firſt attack was upon a caravan of merchants, and the fourteen robbers who fell in that battle, are the firſt martyrs in the Mahometan martyrology. He left to the Arabs almoſt all their former cuſtoms, their circumciſions, their polygamy, their robberies, their wandering life, their deteſtation of wine, (10) which they looked upon to be the blood of the giants. I cannot ſuppoſe that Mr. Gibbon was ignorant of this prejudice, and notwithſtanding he has ſaid, that the legiſlator who prohibited wine, cannot be accuſed of alluring proſelytes, by the indulgence of their ſenſual appetites. By this, he would intimate, that Mahomet, in this inſtance at leaſt, counteracted their inclinations; whereas in truth, he fell in with their humours. Yet this author lays claim to great impartiality.

Mahomet allowed the divine origin of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian Revelations, to gain the good opinion of their profeſſors; for, in his days, the Chriſtian religion

(8) Gibbon's Decline, &c. vol. 9. (9) Mod. Un. Hiſt. vol. 1. (10) Savary's Letters, &c. and the Mod. Un. Hiſt. vol. 1.

religion had ſpread every where, though much corrupted; but it was begun by telling the world that their religions were all falſe, groſs deluſions. Mahometaniſm has been much indebted to the Jewiſh and Chriſtian truths which it contains. It was firſt ſpread among the illiterate Copts and Arabs; but Chriſtianity among the Greeks and Romans, when learning was in its zenith. The former attracted the Barbarians, by promiſing triumphs, not afflictions. Its doctrines were agreeable to fleſh in this life, and in the next it ſpoke of banquets and the enjoyment of Houries; ſo that Averroes might well ſay it was the religion of a hog. During the ſpread of this impoſture, the Greek empire was diſtracted by the Perſian war, and the church rent by the Neſtorian and Monopphy ſite factions. Theſe are obviouſly the human cauſes for the growth of Iſlamiſm, which have nothing in common with the cauſes of the other's increaſe. There can be little doubt, but that it owed much alſo to the ſecret counſel of God, who raiſed up this ſcourge to chaſtiſe a rebellious church in ſome parts, and to extirpate it in others. He dealt thus with the Jewiſh church; and John, in the Apocalypſe, threatens the Chriſtians of theſe very parts with a removal of the light of the goſpel. The introduction of image-worſhip filled up the meaſure of their iniquity. Mahomet aroſe coeval with the practice; and, what is exceedingly remarkable, ſince a number of Chriſtians abandoned it, his votaries have ceaſed to make conqueſts and are declining.

Examine the faith of Mahomet, you will find it ſupported neither by internal or external evidence. He never pretended to propheſy or to work

work a miracle, without which a man can hardly ſhew that he is commiſſioned by heaven. When a miracle was required of him, he anſwers. (11) I am not ſent but to preach the word of God. It is true he appeals to the eloquence of the Alcoran as an argument for its inſpiration; but if we can judge from a French tranſlation, which is a fair way if you allow for idioms, it will be found to be a very ſorry proof indeed. Contraſted with the Old Teſtament, or the Revelations of St. John, the Koran is but a foil to diſplay their high colouring; and yet if they laid claim to inſpiration, merely becauſe of their ſublimity, I believe few perſons would be diſpoſed to concede. Jeſus Chriſt does not talk after this manner. He reaſons thus,—"The works which I do they teſtify of me; ſearch the ſcriptures, they teſtify of me." Mahomet prevented all diſputes about the grounds of his religion; he bids his followers to ſtand apart, when they hear two diſputing, or if one ſhould offer to diſpute with them, to ſay only, God will decide between us at the day of judgment. Who does not ſee that there is no coming at truth by ſuch a procedure? Yet he did wiſely; he knew that its beſt guardian was ignorance. But what ſay the Apoſtles of Jeſus? "Be ready to give an anſwer to every man of the faith that is in you, for we have not followed cunningly deviſed fables."

It is as defective in internal evidence. Contradictions are found in the Koran, and then they ſay, that God changed his mind. Its doctrine of fate is inſupportable, as overthrowing all good counſel and foreſight. By enjoining pilgrimage to

(11) Koran Chap. of the Thunder.

to Mecca, it becomes a local religion, and conſequently it is not fitted for all men. Its frequent ablutions are inconſiſtent with frozen rivers and regions. It allows the divine inſpiration of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian ſcriptures, and yet it makes the Virgin Mary the ſiſter of Aaron, a monſtrous anachroniſm! In his night journey to heaven, he ſaw a cock which reached from the firſt to the ſecond heaven. He ſaw the ſtars hanging from the ſky by golden chains. His angel of death is ſo big, that from one eye to the other, is a journey of one thouſand and ſeventy days. (12) In ſhort, that Mahometaniſm is an impoſture, appears from the lewd character of its author; his diſclaiming miracles; his forbidding any inquiries into the nature of his religion; his propagating it by the ſword; his being deceived in matters of fact; his indulging the ſenſual deſires of men; his ridiculous precepts; the ſwiniſh nature of his future rewards, which every one knows to be unworthy of the ſpiritual nature of God. The *prophet* himſelf was poiſoned. (13) However, as Mahomet reduced many parts from polytheiſm and idolatry to the unity of God, he may be ſaid to have ſowed the ſeeds of Chriſtianity through the eaſt, and *to have fed them with milk.* The whole compaſs of real learning lies on the ſide of the Chriſtians, when a ſpirit of inquiry ſhall revive among the Muſſulmen. Iſlamiſm cannot abide the ſhock. It will overturn from their foundations the idle reveries of their prophet.

SECT,

(12) Chandler's Plain Reaſons, &c. (13) Law's Theory of Religion.

SECT. XVII.

THAT unity of deſign which pervades the Old and New Teſtament, that ſurpriſing correſpondence of types and antitypes, furniſh us with another argument for the divine inſpiration of the ſcriptures. This is an evidence which acts upon the mind with great force, after a diligent examination of the whole Bible, which is an indiſpenſable requiſite towards forming a true judgment of its weight. Its ſtrength cannot be ſo much judged of from a diſſertation, as from reading the Old and New Teſtament with a view of finding this reſemblance, when it will be ſeen that they are always looking towards each other, like the two cherubim over the mercy ſeat. I am well aware, however, that many infidels, totally unacquainted with the uſage of ſcripture, or with the genius of oriental inſtruction, will affect to make light of theſe types; but an objection founded on ignorance of manners is to be deſpiſed.

A type is an action or ſymbol deſigned to be a figure of ſome thing future. They might have taken their riſe from the hieroglyphical characters wherein it was uſual to repreſent one perſon or thing by another. In this way, under the ſymbols of the Jewiſh religion, one of greater excellency was adumbrated, to be diſpenſed when the world was fitted

fitted for its reception. This method of prefiguring one character by another, is not peculiar to the writers of the Old Teſtament, and has gained the applauſe of the moſt refined criticiſm. Virgil alludes to the virtues of Auguſtus in his heroes; Spencer to Elizabeth's, in his Fairy Queen; and ſo does the Holy Spirit to Chriſt, in the worthies and ceremonies of the Moſaic economy. Theſe types uſher the Meſſiah into the world with great pomp and ſolemnity, as they ſhew that the whole contrivance of the Jewiſh diſpenſation, and all its eminent perſonages, were ſo many harbingers to prepare the way for his coming. From the patterns which were exhibited to Moſes on the Mount, and the injunctions given, the Jews might naturally gather that ſomething farther was deſigned by theſe preparations. From the manner of St. Paul's reaſoning with them, and from Juſtin's dialogue with Trypho, it appears that they actually thought their law typical. Of the ſtrict import, however, of each rite and ceremony, they muſt neceſſarily have been ignorant, till they were explained by the events in after times. It is the New Teſtament which gives a noble idea of the old. Viewed through this medium, all its characters and ordinances have a ſplendour and ſignificance unthought of before. The circumſtance of ſuch a number of types agreeing with the antitype, makes the argument from types perſuaſive in the higheſt degree; becauſe it is abſurd to imagine, that ſo many reſemblances in all ſhould be the effects of chance. To give the reader a clearer notion

of

of the ſtrength of this evidence, I ſhall ſelect two characters, viz. Joſeph and Moſes, and draw the parallel, in the words of Mr. Rollin and Biſhop Newton.

JOSEPH.

JOSEPH.

Is hated of his brethren,
For accuſing them;
For being beloved by his father;
For foretelling his future glory.

He is ſent by his father with food for his brethren.
His brethren conſpire againſt his life.
He is ſold for twenty pieces.
He is delivered to ſtrangers by his brethren.
He is condemned by Potiphar, without any one defending him.
He ſuffers in ſilence.
He is placed between two criminals, and fore tells the advancement of one of them.
He lies three years in priſon.
He arrives at glory by humiliation.
He is ſet over Pharaoh's houſe and all Egypt.

Pharaoh alone is above him.
All bend the knee before him.
No bread but in Egypt where Joſeph governs.
All nations come to Egypt to buy corn.
His brethren come to him, own him, fall down before him, and are fixed in Egypt.

CHRIST.

CHRIST.

Is hated of his brethren,
For reproving their ſins;
For ſaying he was God's beloved ſon;
For foretelling that he ſhould come hereafter in glory.
He is ſent to feed Iſrael.

His brethren conſpire againſt his life.
He is ſold for thirty pieces.
He is delivered to ſtrangers by his brethren.
He is condemned by Pilate, without any one defending him.
He ſuffers in ſilence.
He is placed between two criminals, and foretells the advancement of one of them.
He lies three days in the grave.
He arrives at glory by humiliation.
He is made head of the church, and every creature is ſubject to him.
God alone is above him.
All bend the knee before him.
No ſalvation but by Chriſt.
All nations flock to his church.
The Jews will one day own him, fall down before him, and enter into his church.

MOSES.

MOSES.

Reſcued the Jews from idolatry.
Confirmed his religion by miracles.
Promiſed Canaan to thoſe who kept the law.

Faſted forty days.
Supplied the people with bread in the wilderneſs.
His face ſhone when he came down from the mount.
He appointed ſeventy elders.
He ſent twelve men to ſpy out the land.
He was ſaved when the male children were deſtroyed.
He fled from his country to eſcape the ſovereign.
Returned at the warning of an angel.
A lawgiver, a prophet, and a worker of miracles.
Foretold calamities for diſobedience.
Conquered his enemies by ſtretching out his arms.
Made atonement for tranſgreſſors.
Ratified a covenant by ſprinkling of blood.
Deſired to die for the people.
His affection repaid with murmuring.
All the generation which oppoſed him deſtroyed, except two.
The meekeſt of men.
The people could not enter the land of promiſe till his death.
Died by reaſon of the people's rebellious ſpirit.
Died on Nebo before all the people.
Promiſed another prophet.

CHRIST.

CHRIST

Reſcued many nations from idolatry.
Confirmed his religion by miracles.
Promiſed the heavenly Canaan to thoſe who kept the law.
Faſted forty days.
Supplied the people with bread in the wilderneſs.
His face ſhone when he came down from the mount.
He appointed ſeventy diſciples.
He ſent twelve men to viſit all lands.
He was ſaved, when the male children were deſtroyed.
He fled from his country to eſcape the ſovereign.
Returned at the warning of an angel.
A lawgiver, a prophet, and a worker of miracles.
Foretold calamities for diſobedience.
Conquered his enemies on the croſs.
Made atonement for tranſgreſſors.
Ratified a covenant by ſprinkling of blood.
Died for the people.
His affection repaid with murmuring.
All the generation which oppoſed him deſtroyed, except a few.
The meekeſt of men.
People could not enter heaven but by his death.
Died by reaſon of the people's rebellious ſpirit.
Died on Calvary before all the people.
Promiſed another comforter.

Jeſus Chriſt is, therefore, that prophet like unto Moſes, to whom he, at the time of his death, had deſired the Jews to hearken. If commentators have, in the rage for refinement, given forced likeneſſes in ſome types, that proves no more againſt the argument in general, than it does againſt the art of criticiſm; that ſome critics have diſcerned meanings in paſſages which the authors never intended. I ſee no way of eluding the force of the argument from types, except by ſaying that the writers of the Old and New Teſtament conſpired together.

Now after weighing this, and all the other evidences produced for Chriſtianity, I deſire any one to lay his hand upon his heart, and, after a ſerious conſideration, to declare, whether its falſehood, after being ſupported by ſuch teſtimony, would not be ten thouſand-fold more extraordinary than any miracle upon which it is grounded. If Chriſtianity be not true, then ſo many things muſt have happened by chance, that a coincidence ſo unprecedented becomes more wonderful than any thing beſides. It is this maſs of moral certainties, this univerſal harmony, wherein part ſupports part, which renders the ſtructure of evidence ſo complete and impregnable. An unbeliever ſhould conſider this, and not imagine that he has demoliſhed the whole, when he aſſaults a part. When the ſchoolmen were guilty of a ſimilar practice, my Lord Bacon compared it to the ſnatching one ſtick out of a fagot, which though a man might bend, yet the fagot itſelf would not yield. From this concatenation of proofs, the falſehood of the goſpel becomes morally impoſſible. A man of any reading ſees that its morality tranſcends the efforts of human wiſdom,

dom, particularly when it is compared, as it ought to be, with that ſyſtem of knowledge which human reaſon had actually produced, at the time of its promulgation. (1) The character of its founder is ſuperior to that of a mere man; his fiſhermen were not like any other fiſhermen ever heard of. (2) It is evinced, by the atteſtation of men's ſenſes, by hiſtory, by the ſucceſſion of churches, by friends and by enemies, and by all things that prove any other relation. If the teſtimony of thoſe who bear evidence to it be rejected, there is no paſt fact which may not be rejected on better grounds, ſo that there will be no certainty in hiſtory. The actions of Socrates, concerning which no one doubts, are worſe atteſted than thoſe of Jeſus Chriſt. Divine teſtimony has been given to the goſpel by voices, by angels, by viſions, by dreams, by the Holy Spirit, by the fulfilling of prophecy, by miracles, by the ſtupendous progreſs of the goſpel, (3) by the judgments which God inflicted on its enemies. (4) To ſay therefore, that it was a human fable, tranſcends the credulity of an old woman, and is much the ſame as if you believed that a child built a man of war. The evidence given for Chriſtianity is as perfect in its kind as the mode of demonſtration in mathematics, which, as it can only apply to neceſſary truths, is excluded from the proof of facts. But there are four rules, which concurring, make it impoſſible for a matter of fact to be falſe, viz. When it is ſuch as men's ſenſes can judge of; when it is done in the face of the world; when public monuments are kept

(1) Beattie's Evid. (2) Edward's Survey, &c. (3) Vide Lactantius de Mort. Perſec. (4) Beattie's Evid.

in memory of it and outward, actions performed; when ſuch actions do commence from the time that the matter of fact was done. The two laſt make it impoſſible for the credulity of after ages to be impoſed upon. Thus the goſpels ſay, that the Lord's ſupper, an order of clergy, &c. were eſtabliſhed by Chriſt; but if this were a fiction, then there would have been no Lord's ſupper, no order of clergy, &c. when it was promulged, which would confute it without farther argument. Mahometaniſm has not the two firſt rules, Heathenism has the third, but not the fourth: the Pagans themſelves allowed that their Bacchanalia, or drunken revels, were inſtituted many ages after the time of Bacchus. All thoſe rules hold ſtrongly with reſpect to Judaiſm, which had many public monuments and ceremonies commemorating miraculous facts. This is what Leſlie called his ſhort method with the Deiſts. We have ſeen now that there is every evidence for Chriſtianity, conſiſtent with moral liberty, i. e. the aſſent is not conſtrained, which is neceſſary, in order that there may be any prudence or merit in becoming a Chriſtian. We may cry out in exultation, *nil deſperandum Chriſto duce, et auſpice Chriſto.*

SECT. XVIII.

THOUGH the reader may be convinced now that there is no foundation for Deiſm, yet when he conſiders the nature of the human mind, it ought not to ſurprize him that there are many Deiſts. If it followed, from the three angles of a triangle being equal to two right ones, that men ſhould not be debauched, ſhould not get drunk,

ſhould

ſhould not ſpeak obſcenely, that they ſhould ſuppreſs a talent for profane ridicule, that they ſhould give much in charity, that they ſhould attend public worſhip on the ſabbath, inſtead of conſulting their own humour, this plain mathematical truth would have been denied long ago by Senſualiſts. Hobbes actually called in queſtion the principles of geometry.

Many exempted from vice by conſtitution, would be wrought upon as ſtrongly by the pride of ſingularity, and the affectation of ſuperior diſcernment, to cooperate with their views; but more eſpecially from an aſſurance of being cried up by a party, which, if not celebrated for attainments of learning, are, however, generally numerous, rich, and powerful. It is almoſt needleſs to obſerve how ſtrongly the proſpect of ſuch praiſe intoxicates the brain.

I have already made obſervations on many of the odd objections raiſed by them againſt the Jewiſh and Chriſtian revelations, and ſhall here particularize ſuch as have been omitted.

An objection has been drawn from the ſuppoſed obſcurity of the ſcripture. Now, admitting that ſome parts are obſcure, ought not a fair inquirer to examine, whether this may not proceed from the nature of the things treated of, the perverſions of men, and ſuch like cauſes. On an inveſtigation it will be found, that in fact, theſe are the true cauſes of the embarraſſments which ſome feel. For the ſcriptures treat about the nature of the incomprehenſible God, his decrees, and providence. Theſe are ſubjects neceſſarily abſtruſe, as well from the narrowneſs of our conceptions, as from this, that few accuſtom themſelves to abſtract reaſoning. In a book

of

of metaphyſics we expect to find difficulties, becauſe we know that they flow inevitably from the matters therein diſcuſſed; and therefore we do not always blame the writers for obſcurity. Berkely has written on topics of this kind with peculiar clearneſs, yet every reader muſt be attentive, in order to develope his meaning. Some, from natural weakneſs, or an uncultivated underſtanding, cannot diſcern the force of his arguments at all; yet it would be abſurd to infer from this, that he treated his ſubject ill. In like manner, according to the different capacities of men, the ſcripture muſt be obſcure to ſome, where it may be very clear to others. If a Deiſt gave the world a ſyſtem of natural religion, it would be no objection, that the myſtery of the ſelf-exiſtence of God was not cleared up therein, becauſe our minds are ſo conſtituted as to be incapable of forming any judgment about it; and yet he would argue at large from the principle.

Another cauſe of obſcurity hath ariſen from the diviſion of the bible into chapters and verſes; at leaſt it is the cauſe why different ſects pretend to find their reſpective tenets therein. (1) For as connexion has not been regarded in the diviſion, any perſon may ſnatch out a verſe, and giving it without the context, may make it anſwer any end, may make it prove any thing. No other book in the world has been mangled in ſuch a manner.

The too exact and literal tranſlation of idioms and proverbs is another cauſe of obſcurity. Suppoſe that we rendered, word for word, into another language, theſe idioms of ours, *a wife brought*

(1) Lock's Preface to the Epiſtles.

brought to bed, a wife in the ſtraw, they would be unintelligible.

Inattention to, and a change of ancient cuſtoms is another cauſe. Cicero confeſſes, that theſe rendered the laws of the twelve tables perplexed in his time, and they have in a leſſer degree affected the holy ſcriptures: yet when theſe books were written, certainly it was neceſſary that they ſhould be drawn up in conformity to the ſtyle and uſages then in practice, not in ours; for then they would have been abſolutely inexplicable to them. We know the greater part of their cuſtoms; whereas they, from the nature of things muſt have been ignorant of ours.

Another fruitful cauſe of perplexing the ſenſe of ſcripture, has ariſen from the perverſeneſs of men, not from the difficulty of the book. We rarely hear any complaints from the honeſt Chriſtian about its abſtruſeneſs; he finds in its precepts an eaſy guide to immortal life. No, they who obſcure its luſtre are ſuch as come to read it with a ſyſtem of opinions formed before hand, to which they are reſolved to make it bend, inſtead of making their opinions bend to it. Some are determined to make it countenance the prejudices of their own education; ſome that it ſhall countenance a new hypotheſis of their invention; for religion abounds with ſchemers. The expoſitions of mercenary Commentators have thrown a ſhade over the ſcriptures. Every Chriſtian church has had its hirelings who have tortured them, to make them anſwer the ſyſtem of religion eſtabliſhed by the civil powers. (2) Alexander Roſs, in his Virgilius Evangelizans, has given

(2) Jefferie's Comment. &c.

given a hiſtory of Chriſt in the verſes of Virgil; ſo he has made Virgil an Evangeliſt. In the very ſame way, by wreſting paſſages, every ſect has made St. Paul a member of their church. When other writings are treated in the ſame manner, a like confuſion enſues. (3) Thus each of the writers of manifeſtos before a war, makes his own ſide the right one, and pretends that the treaty made for him: two lawyers pretend that an act of parliament makes for each of them. An impartial ſpectator may know which of the two is right, by due examination. Indeed, in every thing, when treated of as an art or ſcience, there will be diſputes, but particularly in divinity, which ſo nearly intereſts us. In countries of religious liberty, theſe muſt neceſſarily take place; and they are not without their uſes, as they ſerve to keep the flame of devotion alive, and by them we often come at truth. In countries where they have no religious liberty, they muſt adhere to ſyſtems introduced in times of darkneſs, and therefore cannot rectify errors. The variety of opinions on a ſubject ſhews it to be a ſubject of utility. Thus it is with philoſophy, medicine, &c. If the ſcriptures be uſeleſs, becauſe diſputes have happened about paſſages in them, this principle would overſet the religion of Deiſts entirely, becauſe there is not one principle of natural religion which has not been controverted by ſome one or other; and, therefore, by this argument, natural religion is uſeleſs; and ſo there is no ſuch thing as religion at all: a concluſion, which, I fear, many would wiſh to find true.

It

(3) Skelton's Deiſm revealed.

It muſt be allowed Chriſtians have their diſputes; but then they never diſpute, as the philoſophers did, about the exiſtence of God, his attributes, his unity, his providence, a future judgment: they never heſitate about the rules of morality, i. e. they have rarely diſputed about eſſentials. Their contentions have turned chiefly on ceremonies, and unmeaning myſteries.

I am well perſuaded, that there is a moral reaſon for leaving ſome difficulties in the holy ſcriptures; becauſe I know, from mine own experience and that of others, that the conſtant application which this produces, has an admirable effect upon the mind. If all parts were ſo plain, that he who runs might read them, ingenious men would, after one reading, turn to other purſuits, and learned men would not be delighted as they are, in trying their abilities upon it. If *all* parts were level to any common apprehenſion, I am ſure it would have been aſked by infidels, why were not difficulties left here and there to exerciſe men's talents, and to induce thoſe who love ſubtleties to ſtudy it? It is a true, yet glorious character of this book, that the moſt ignorant may learn all requiſite knowledge in it, and the moſt knowing learn to diſcern their ignorance. If the obſcure parts of ſcripture contained truths neceſſary to be known, objections from obſcurity would have force; but we may reſt aſſured that they do not; for if neceſſary we muſt ſuppoſe them to be known. (4) The great Sir Robert Boyle compares an objector to the obſcurity of ſcripture, to a beggar who would refuſe to take what would enrich him from

(4) On the ſtyle of the Scrip.

from a mine, becauſe the whole was not laid open to his view. Some portions of ſcripture related to former ages, ſome to the preſent, ſome to future. The authors of the *Independent Whig*, though at beſt great latitudinarians, allow that it is very reaſonable to ſay, that when God diſguiſes his will in dark and doubtful expreſſions, it is plain, that the time of making that part known unto men is not yet come. (5) If, ſays Mr. Wollaſton, I met a book full of good ſenſe, and, as I read on, came to ſome leaves written in a language which I could not underſtand, I ſhould conclude that the ſame good ſenſe ran through the reſt. This was the rational inference of a very learned man. He who would reject the Old Teſtament, becauſe he could not underſtand the viſions of Ezekiel, might as properly reject mathematics, becauſe he could not ſquare a circle.

It is pretty well known, that they who talk moſt about the obſcurity of ſcripture, are men who have never read it at all, but borrowed their ideas about it from miſrepreſenters; as if a man would Judge of Homer from Homer Traverſty; or they have read it curſorily, without any aſſiſtance, though they would read Virgil, or even Shakſpeare with notes. Many alſo come to the ſtudy of it with a jaundiced eye, and a deſire to make exceptions.

Having now, as I hope, throughly conſidered this objection, I ſhall paſs on to another, I mean that which has been drawn from the Chriſtian religion's not having been univerſal in all times and places. If we could not give a reaſon for this, yet we might anſwer with Job's friend, "Canſt thou by ſearching find out God?

(5) Relig. of Nature.

God? Canſt thou find out the Almighty to perfection?" (6) It is right to inquire into the ends of God's diſpenſations; but when theſe ends are concealed (which certainly may often be the caſe) to reaſon from our ignorance of them, and to call that reaſon, is abſurd.

But it is very extraordinary that ſuch an objection as this ſhould be made, the principle of which lies equally againſt all the other favours diſpenſed by God to mankind, which are directly analogous to this, in not being univerſally conferred. They are gratuitous. Therefore, the uſefulneſs of a revelation is no more an argument that God ſhould make it neceſſarily univerſal, than the uſefulneſs of the comforts of life is an argument that all ſhould be bleſſed with them. A man might as well object to God's diſpoſing the earth, ſo as not to be equally fertile to all its inhabitants. Egypt is fruitful, while Lybia is a deſert. Oil and wine have been denied to many nations. How many tribes have wandered without laws, and the bleſſings of civil ſociety? Let the objector tell us why the Hottentots are ſo inferior to the Europeans in attainments; why the Europeans are inferior to Newton and Leibnitz; why all men have not the ſame health, &c. by which he will learn, that his objection lies equally ſtrong againſt the natural, moral, and animal world: nay, in many of the above caſes, there is a phyſical inability of bettering themſelves; whereas the Chriſtian religion is within the reach of all nations. It is with it as with commerce. Many kingdoms, fitted to enjoy the conveniencies of both, reject them through want of

(6) Butler's Analogy.

of attention; and how abſurd is it to impute their negligence to either? I am very certain, that if an Atheiſt preſſed a Deiſt with this, viz. that becauſe the being of one God was never univerſally acknowledged, therefore it was not a truth, the latter would laugh at his argument: and how can he expect better treatment from a Chriſtian, when he reaſons in the ſame manner? But nothing can be more ſurpriſing than that a Deiſt ſhould make this exception at all; becauſe the difficulty (if it were one) would be preciſely the ſame on the footing of natural, as of revealed religion. For let us ſuppoſe with him, that there has been no revelation at all. Then it is certain, that here in Europe we have greater advantages, civil, political, and religious, than the inhabitants of Africa; therefore, on this ſcheme alſo, God has vouchſafed more advantages to one people than to another. Beſides, allowing a revelation to be nominally as general as you pleaſe, all its doctrines could never be equally received by all. The diverſity of genius, of aſſociations, &c. would prevent uniformity. Moral cauſes depend much on the diſpoſitions of the ſubjects or perſons to which they are applied, juſt as the ſun which ſoftens wax will harden clay. (7) The light ſhines indifferently on all objects; it is reflected by ſome, tranſmitted by ſome, imbibed by ſome; and ſo it is with revelation. No force of demonſtration, except ſuch an one as would overpower the faculties, could prevail on all men to admit it; and therefore no objection can lie againſt it for want of univerſality. The Jews and Deiſts argue in the ſame manner. The former argue as if they could not reject the Meſſiah when

(7) Barton's Analogy.

when he comes; and the latter as if nations were, in ſpite of themſelves, to receive the goſpel; though Jeſus Chriſt has declared that he only came to *call*, not to *compel* mankind to receive his eaſy yoke.

If the Chriſtian ſcheme ſuppoſed that God would judge thoſe who have no revelation, as rigorouſly as us who have, the objection would have weight, withre gard to ſuch nations as could not know the truth. But it declares directly the contrary, as that they who have no law ſhall not be judged by the law, and that it is impoſſible to believe without a preacher. Chriſtians are with reſpect to them, what perſons of education, of great talents, what kings and great officers of ſtate are with reſpect to the vulgar, i. e. they are more anſwerable, and expoſed to a downfall in the ratio of their elevation. As, however, no one refuſes theſe qualifications or poſts for that reaſon, theſe being conſidered as the moſt deſirable of attainments, ſo it is with Chriſtians: if they have ten talents to account for, they know with aſſurance that they may do this, and gain ten other talents, having a certainty of immortality, while the Heathen have only hopes of uncovenanted mercies.

I ſhall now ſhew, that a revelation muſt, from its nature, be ſpread by degrees. (8) For it muſt be either communicated to ſome ſelect perſons to be gradually propagated, as the Chriſtian revelation was, or it muſt be infuſed in every perſon by immediate inſpiration, or it muſt be publiſhed again, by freſh miracles worked in every age. Now, in the ſecond caſe, unleſs the inſpiration wrought irreſiſtibly, which would exclude freedom, the ſame objection would lie againſt it as againſt

(8) Law's Theory, &c.

againſt the firſt, viz. want of being univerſally efficacious. In the third caſe, let us ſuppoſe, that there had been conſtant miracles working for Judaiſm till the coming of Chriſt, then the higheſt evidence which God could give, would have been trite at the coming of the Meſſiah; from their continuance they would have been conſidered as parts of the courſe of nature, and therefore would not have awakened the attention at all. Thus God would have been precluded from ever bringing about a reformation. If then greater objections lie againſt the propagation of Chriſtianity in any other way than the preſent, it follows that its propagation muſt be partial. (9) If Chriſtians had led the ſame exemplary lives which they did at firſt; if Chriſtian princes had been as eager to extend the religion of their Lord as their empire; if ſubjects had laboured for its extenſion, as they have for the extenſion of their commerce, it would have been now almoſt univerſally profeſſed. Even as things are, the Chriſtians, and they alone, are gradually encircling the whole earth. America, New Holland, Siberia, the Iſlands in the Pacific will ſoon be overrun.

Having anſwered the objection made from its want of univerſality as to place, I ſhall proceed to anſwer that drawn from its want of univerſality as to time. In the firſt place, the principle upon which this objection proceeds, is erroneous, viz. That God ſhould give the ſame favours to all which he gives to any. This rule has never been obſerved by him, as far as we can ſee; for he diſpenſes his favours variouſly. Socrates, ſpeaking of that divine perſon who

(9) Bradford's 9th Serm. at Boyle's Lec.

who could inſtruct the world, ſays, he will come when he pleaſes; he did not ridiculouſly think that he ought to come at the beginning. Though this obſervation might alone ſtand for a reply, yet reaſons are not wanting to ſhew, that it was not merely from his good will and pleaſure that he deferred to give the Chriſtian revelation, but that it was neceſſarily delayed for a ſeaſon. For if Chriſt had appeared among the very firſt men, (which ſuppoſition is neceſſary by the hypotheſis) it would be impoſſible for him to prove to them that he came from God. They could not diſtinguiſh miracles, as being yet unacquainted with the courſe of nature; and to ſpeak of convincing by ancient prophecies is manifeſtly abſurd. But admitting, that, by ſome means, they were convinced of its truth, how would it be poſſible, after ſuch an interval of time, after ſo many broken unconnected periods in which there were no writings, no hiſtory to prove to us that a ſyſtem ſo extenſive was tranſmitted to our age in any degree of purity? If it had been given in the age of Herodotus, i. e. four hundred and fifty years before Chriſt, it would juſtly have been called a dark and fabulous age; and from hence we may eaſily gueſs what epithets would have been beſtowed upon the firſt age of the world. The reader ſees now, that had Chriſtianity been finally revealed in the beginning, writing and languages, arts, ſciences, and commerce muſt have all been taken out of the natural courſe of invention and improvement, and all at once revealed with it, to hand it down diſtinctly to diſtant times and countries. This imperfect ſtate of the arts and ſciences in ancient times, leads us to another conſideration of great importance. It is admirably obſerved by Warburton, that it

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is abſurd to teach Chriſtianity to the Indians, till after they have been civilized; for certain laws preſuppoſe certain improvements in ſociety. This is juſt the caſe with the Chriſtian law, which is adapted to a ſtate of refinement. (10) The Chriſtian religion always implies a certain degree of civility and learning. Therefore all uncivilized brutiſh nations are incapable of learning Chriſtianity, ſo that it ſhould have an effect on their lives, juſt as they are incapable of learning other ſciences. A Deiſt will acquieſce in this more readily, when he is informed that Hume reaſons in the ſame way, and ſays, (11) that valour and a love of liberty are the only virtues that can have place among an uncivilized people. Solon muſt have thought in like manner, when he ſaid he gave the Athenians laws, not the beſt in themſelves, but the beſt that they were capable of receiving. This reaſon for Chriſt's advent being deferred, has occurred to Euſebius, who obſerves, (12) that the moſt ancient generation of men were unable to bear ſo excellent a doctrine.

We now plainly diſcern the cauſe why Jeſus appeared in the Auguſtan age, an era proverbial for refinement in arts and manners. Since the foundation of the world, there was no other time, wherein ſo many nations were qualified to receive the goſpel, becauſe there was no other time in which civilization was ſo far ſpread, and a communication between different kingdoms ſo well opened. Neither was there any other time when a revelation was ſo much wanted to reform the world. I have already ſhewn that the Jews were

(10) Johnſon's Hiſtory of the Engliſh Language.
(11) Hiſt. Eng. vol. 1. (12) Eccl. Hiſt. in Initio.

were extravagantly wicked in thoſe days. Among the Gentiles, reaſon, philoſophy, and tradition, which were given to light them to virtue and happineſs, had ſpent their force. St. Paul and Salluſt give a black catalogue of vices to which the nations had been familiarized.

(13) It is probable, that Chriſt's advent was about the middle age of the world, for God's ſcheme ſeems to be an immenſe progreſſive one, each riſing upon the other. He imitated the Houſeholder in the Goſpel, who ſent ſeveral ſervants into his vineyard, but at laſt ſent his ſon. This was neceſſary from the ſtate of the world, which has been properly compared to a child growing gradually in wiſdom: as it would be abſurd to propoſe the ſame truths to a child and to an adult, ſo it would to propoſe the Chriſtian ſcheme to the firſt men, for a doctrine muſt ever be proportioned to the recipient. The diſpenſations of one age would not fit another. A ritual religion, with gorgeous forms, was beſt accommodated to an unrefined people. Therefore, how unjuſt is it in a Deiſt to call ſome Jewiſh laws prepoſterous, becauſe they are unneceſſary to ſociety in its preſent improved ſtate. If a man, at ſome future time, ſhould call that law of Peter the Great prepoſterous, which enacted that no lady ſhould get drunk at an aſſembly, he would be conſidered as throwing an unmerited reflection upon the lawgiver, becauſe the law was neceſſary when it was paſſed, though it may appear odd enough hereafter.

But though the time when Chriſt put on fleſh was not the firſt age, yet the benefits of his advent were imparted all along; for he is ſaid to be

(13) Law's Theory, &c.

the Lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world in the counſel of God; ſo that though the revelation be not univerſal, the redemption is. If Chriſt had come early, the argument from the univerſal clearneſs of the law of nature would be then unanſwerable; for men borrowing from revelation, without perceiving it, would take every notion to be the clear deduction of reaſon, and we ſhould not be able to confute them, having no fact or experience to recur to.

As Mr. Gibbon has borrowed all the arguments of Orobio, from a deſire to inſinuate that the Jewiſh polity was to be eternal, while the anſwers of Limborch are carefully kept out of ſight, it will be proper to ſhew that nothing can be more unequivocally declared in any place, than the temporary duration of Judaiſm is in the Old Teſtament. Did not Moſes tell the people, that they were to hearken to a prophet like unto himſelf, which God was to raiſe up among them? Did not Jeremiah tell the people, that a new covenant ſhould ſhortly be made with them, not according to the covenant which he made with them on their coming out of Egypt? Did not Daniel tell them, that the ſacrifices ſhould ceaſe? Did not their own famous tradition in the Talmud ſhew that they themſelves thought their law not to be immutable, when it is ſaid that they ſhould be two thouſand years under the law, and two thouſand under Meſſiah? It was reaſonable that they ſhould infer this from a variety of circumſtances. They ſaw ſome of its eſſential rites ſuſpended immediately after their inſtitution, as the Paſſover and Circumciſion. They ſaw that many ceremonies were inſtituted againſt idolatry, which would be uſeleſs when idolatry

idolatry was deſtroyed. They ſaw that many duties of that law were to be performed at Jeruſalem only, and that the feaſts were accommodated to the ſeaſons of that country only, and that, therefore, when the iſles afar off were to obey his law, it could not be the law then ſubſiſting. The arguments of the modern Jews for the perpetuity of their law, are mere illuſions. When they argue from the immutability of God, this would make againſt its being given at firſt; for then he ſhould have confined himſelf to the precepts of Noah: it would make againſt his diſpenſing with any part of the law and yet they cannot deny that he did this. When they ſay that they were promiſed their ſtatutes for ever, becauſe the word *Leholem* is applied to them, let them look at the 7 chap. of 2 Samuel and 19 verſe, and they will ſee in what ſenſe David underſtood that word. If *Leholem* be always taken in the eternal ſenſe, then from the 32 chap. of Iſaiah and 14 verſe, the Jews are never to inhabit Jeruſalem again, which, however, they expect to do. That is called an *eternal* ſervitude which laſted only from jubilee to jubilee. When a lawgiver delivers a code of laws to any people, with an injunction that they ſhould obſerve them throughout their generations, his authority makes them become perpetual to that people; they are not at liberty to alter them: but who could think that the lawgiver himſelf was hereby tied down to the ſame conditions, when circumſtances changed? God contrived the Jewiſh economy in ſuch a manner, that he could put a viſible and neceſſary end to it, when they refuſed to do it themſelves. To effect this, it was only neceſſary to deſtroy Jeruſalem; which he did.

I believe that the true ſyſtem of the world never ſuffered more from the perplexed revolutions, and malignant aſpects of the ancient aſtronomers, than the true ſyſtem of revelation has from an early mixture of myſteries, Heatheniſh dogmas, and the ruſt of ignorant times. As the aſtronomers diſcovered among the heavenly lights, bulls, bears, and ſcorpions, ſo others have diſcovered I know not what, in the oracles of God. I mention this, to apprize an unbeliever, that he is often fighting with the air, while he impugns opinions, which have their foundation only in legal eſtabliſhments, pertinaciouſly defended. (14) When the ſcripture ſpeaks of a myſtery, it always means thereby ſome ſubject not well underſtood; and as Chriſtianity extends to more particulars than natural religion, it muſt have more difficulties. Theſe difficulties are inevitable, becauſe God's ways are not as our ways, and becauſe we can only ſee as through a glaſs darkly in our preſent ſtate; nay, in heaven itſelf, there muſt ſtill be many objects of faith which the higheſt Archangel cannot ſcan, ſeeing that any created intelligence is to the Deity, what a cock-boat is to the ocean, what this earth is to the great inane. In teaching phyſics, or any other ſcience, young people take ſeveral things for granted at firſt, on the authority of their maſters. I humbly apprehend that when reaſon has once juſtified, by motives of credulity, the authority of the holy ſcriptures, we ſhould act in like manner, and even ſacrifice preſumptions. This is more rational than to ſay, as ſome do, that ſuch a thing is impoſſible, becauſe they cannot

(14) Ben Mordecai, &c. vol. 2.

cannot comprehend it; for then they fooliſhly make their conceptions the meaſure of all poſſibilities. Let ſuch recollect, that a thing's being thought abſurd is no proof at all that it is ſo in fact. There are ſeveral facts which reaſon will, at firſt ſight, diſapprove of, and will for ever diſapprove of, if ſhe does not examine the motives of credibility on which they reſt. For inſtance, to ſay that there were antipodes, was once thought to be a moſt abſurd declaration. An ignorant fox-hunter would imagine you were ridiculing him, if you told him, that while he was galloping after his game, the planet in which he rode proceeded in its courſe with much greater celerity than his horſe, and that it appears like a ſtar to the inhabitants of other worlds. Therefore, if, at any time, we think a myſtery is propoſed for our belief, let us cover our faces, like the Cherubim in Iſaiah, and like them adore; for religion begins with a myſtery, viz. the ſelf-exiſtence of God. If a Deiſt was preſſed with the introduction of evil, with reconciling the preſcience of God with the free will of man, he would find that his own ſcheme had its myſteries; and if he fled to Atheiſm, he would be overwhelmed with them. Indeed, if a man could ſhew, that he has clear and diſtinct ideas of certain objects of faith and reaſon, and could then prove that theſe contradicted each other, his objection would, in my opinion, be unanſwerable; becauſe right reaſon is to be conſidered as a revelation extending to a certain length: but I defy any adverſary to ſhew any ſuch oppoſition between reaſon and any genuine article of the Chriſtian faith. The ſceptical and ſubtle Bayle, in his poſthumous reply to

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Le Clerc, owned that there was no contradiction between them.

I ſhall take no notice of the abuſe poured upon our religion, for cauſing intolerance and bloodſhed; becauſe that is juſt as if a man abuſed corn and wine, for creating drunkenneſs and intemperance. If we believe ſome gentlemen, it was all abſurdity, all weakneſs; it could make no reply; and yet, ſomehow, it baffled all the ſtrong arguments of princes, of magiſtrates, of Pagan prieſts, with the loud and inſatiable demands of paſſion. Their railings at the Chriſtian revelation remind me of thoſe madmen in Ethiopia, mentioned by Diodorus, who look up at the ſun and curſe him, when his rays ſcorch them.

SECT. XIX.

CONSIDERING the momentous importance of religion, and the everlaſting conſequences which our opinion on the ſubject of Chriſtianity may draw after it, the mere poſſibility of its being true ſhould induce all men to act up to its obligations. A man in a ſtorm would greedily throw his moſt valuable effects overboard, if he thought that, by ſo doing, there was a remote probability of ſaving his life. Therefore, how unwiſe, how inſane is the conduct of Deiſts, who ſhut their eyes againſt what s not only barely poſſible, or probable, but what is morally certain. (1) An Atheiſt is more inexcuſable than a Deiſt in this only, that he needs merely to look around him; whereas the other has ſome reading to go through. To juſtify his incredulity

(1) Skelton's Deiſm revealed.

incredulity to the world, an unbeliever ſhould ſhew the falſehood of our religion with the moſt luminous evidence, and not content himſelf with a *may be*, or a *perhaps*. But, undoubtedly, he cannot accompliſh this; (1) for he cannot intuitively perceive that the facts mentioned in the goſpel were never done; he cannot demonſtrate it; and therefore all he can ſay, is to aſſert obſtinately, that he believes they were never done. He is forced to build his belief on the cruelty of Jews and Gentiles; he has no teſtimony on his ſide; for it was not argument, but the ſword, which the Heathens uſed againſt the faith. Wherefore, infidelity is well characterized by Dr. Barrow, as not regarding, as not weighing, as not yielding to reaſon; and by ſome other perſon, as believing in all unbelief. A twentieth part of the evidence for Chriſtianity would gain credit with it, for other opinions, if they had no connexion with the conduct of life. (2) Men are not unbelievers now, becauſe they are leſs credulous; for gulls and dupes are as frequent as ever: no, it is becauſe luxury and corruption have ſpread among us, which have never failed to baniſh religion. It is not eaſy to ſtop the progreſs of ſo contagious an evil as infidelity. Incredulity has many charms for ſuch as have every gratification within their graſp. To do what a man pleaſes without remorſe, not to believe in the pains of another life, is a delightful ſyſtem. They are againſt the ſcripture, becauſe the ſcripture is againſt them. It is their intereſt to think it an impoſture, becauſe their conſciences give them

(1) Skelton's Deiſm revealed. (2) Seed's Sermons.

them no eaſe till they leave off their ſins, or diſbelieve the bible. (3) It is recorded of Socrates, that he would ſpend twenty-four hours in deep meditation; but our free-thinkers are a more lively ſet of men. A clumſy joke, or a wretched ſophiſm, paſſes for a demonſtration over the merry midnight bowl. This confirms the wavering youth; he ſprings forth dauntleſs. View him in his career; *Ille metus omnes et inexorabile fatum ſubjecit pedibus.* That this waggery ſhould have ſuch powerful effects, is certainly owing, in great meaſure, to this, that the paſſions are engaged on its ſide; yet I am ſure it is aided by the inability of many clergymen, who are ſo ignorant of the grounds and reaſons of their profeſſion, as to be unable to detect the moſt glaring fallacy. They ſubſtitute for an anſwer an unmeaning laugh, or a fit of paſſion. Young perſons ſee this: they ſee, moreover, that thoſe very perſons are often adepts at different games; in knowing the value of livings; in the ſtatutes, for recovering tythes; and ſo they conclude, that if the Chriſtian religion was defenſible, it would be defended by ſuch men.

As luxury has introduced infidelity among us, ſo it introduced infidelity or epicureiſm among the Romans. The increaſe of this ſect has been ranked by Monteſquieu among the prime cauſes of the declenſion of the empire. Now, as the ſame cauſes produce the ſame effects, we have every thing to dread, even in a political point of view, from the ſpread of theſe pernicious tenets. They inſpire a ſelfiſh turn of mind. When a man

(3) Minute Philoſopher.

man has once perſuaded himſelf, that he may poſtpone his duties to God, his country, and his king, as often as ſelf-intereſt claſhes with them, public ſpirit is apt to die within him. Corrupt miniſters of ſtate, and their tools, are generally Deiſts. When I hear a rare inſtance of one of thoſe infidels, who denies a future ſtate, being praiſed for regularity of life, and for indulging no paſſion, I infer that this proceeds from conſtitution; for on his principles he has no merit at all. Men are ſometimes better than their principles. Many Epicureans were brave men; yet Cicero argued rightly, that (4) on their principles they could not be brave. (5) Neckar obſerves, that a conduct of this ſort makes him recollect not the inefficacy, but the influence of religious opinions. Living where virtue is reſpected, they attend to her. This great ſtateſman adds, that a retired life, a love of ſtudy, and a deſire of ſhewing that their opinions are not inimical to morality, operates powerfully on irreligious writers. Therefore, the evil conſequences of infidelity do not affect its profeſſors only, but the ſociety at large. If infidels were ſo fond of natural religion as they pretend, we would find them reading books on natural law; ſome of them would write for the uſe of their brethren, and be ſerious, whereas we ſee nothing of this; they are only anxious to rid themſelves of the fears of puniſhment. They do not wiſh to ſubſtitute any religion at all in the place of Chriſtianity. It excites horror in the ſpectator, to behold one of thoſe amuſing himſelf, even on the verge of the grave

(4) De Officiis, Lib. 1. (5) Importance of Relig. Opin.

grave, with ribaldry, wine, and the remembrance of former impurities. The character of thoſe ſenſual infidels is well marked by the poet, who, in ridiculing their pretenſions to thoughtleſſneſs and reflection, which they ſay induced them to doubt, ſpeaks thus:

> Doubt!
> Why they neither doubt, nor judge, nor think,
> Nor hope, nor fear; but curſe, debauch, and drink.

As a deſire to be freed from the fancied incumbrances of religion, has moſt certainly led ſome to Deiſm, ſo has pride and a deſire of being thought ſagacious led on others. Of all the methods adopted by vanity to acquire diſtinction, none is eaſier than profeſſing a diſbelief of the Chriſtian religion, ſays the ingenious Viceſſimus Knox. When a man, with an air of pity, bewails a prieſt-ridden and deluded world, he immediately attracts the veneration of a gaping crowd, as being a perſon of ſingular diſcernment and extenſive reading. This is a very eaſy method of paſſing for a genius. How many creatures, after travelling through France and Italy, think that they cannot ſhew their progreſs and enlarged views better, than by ſhaking off all reverence for the Chriſtian religion! (6) Finding in themſelves ſtrong deſires of being conſpicuous, and ſmall abilities to attain it, they are reſolved, with Eroſtratus, who fired the temple of Diana, to acquire by ſacrilege what is denied to their parts. If Deiſm were the prevailing creed, thoſe men would be Chriſtians. They pretend to have a great veneration for the moral duties of Chriſtianity,

(6) Boyle's Excellence of Theol.

tianity, but they put on a look of myſtery and reſerve, when its evidences are ſpoken of. Though they omit no opportunity of ſcattering about malignant hints, they always inſinuate that they could ſay a great deal more which they conceal, as not wiſhing to unhinge weak minds. It is exceedingly hard to defend religion, or any other matter, againſt ſingle unconnected ſarcaſms. How often will you ſee a droll making a moſt reſpectable character the laughing-ſtock of a company, by ſuch a procedure? It was thus that Ariſtophanes made the great Socrates ridiculous before the Athenians. Alſo, becauſe of the ſoberneſs which muſt run through the reaſonings of a Chriſtian, an infidel has great advantage over him before a diſſolute noiſy audience, where they look rather for amuſement than truth.

I do not ſcruple to ſet down avarice as another cauſe of infidelity. Avaricious men, who wiſh to get into their hands the revenues of the miniſters of religion, contract a hatred againſt religion. There are ſome whom nothing has prejudiced ſo much againſt Chriſtianity, as the payment of their tythes. In like manner, when men lay out money by going to law, they begin to rail at law and lawyers.

Certain abuſes incorporated with Chriſtianity in certain countries, may be conſidered as cauſes of Deiſm on two accounts. Sometimes they are confounded with the Chriſtian religion itſelf: again, when men find that the world has been long duped in ſome points, they paſs into the oppoſite extreme, incredulity.

Another

Another very fertile cauſe of infidelity ſtill remains to be taken notice of; it is this. Some perſons ſit down, and form to themſelves a ſcheme of revelation, by reaſoning *a priori*. Now, though no two of them can agree in the ſame ſcheme, yet each thinks that if a revelation were ever made, it muſt have agreed with his particular hypotheſis, and that the omniſcient God muſt have reaſoned like a feeble mortal; therefore, when he compares his plan with the ſcripture, and is diſappointed, he turns unbeliever. In the ſame manner he would be an unbeliever in natural religion and providence, if you can ſuppoſe, that, previous to fact and experience, he could have ſat down and formed a train of reaſoning *a priori*, how God ſhould have governed the world. He would find the reality to be very different from his preconceived hypotheſis; there is ſo much natural and moral evil, children cut off at their birth, &c. When a man of any learning becomes a Deiſt, it is chiefly owing to this laſt cauſe.

I cannot imagine, that the learning or character of either ancient or modern Infidel writers can have any weight in perverting any. They are a very ſorry tribe. Of the three principal who oppoſed Chriſtianity in its infancy, Celſus is thought to have held the doctrine of Epicurus, which excludes the idea of religion properly ſo called. (7) Julian was a ſlave to the moſt abject ſuperſtition. The reader of his works is aſtoniſhed to find ſuch repeated proofs of his being deluded by the ſophiſts, and of an underſtanding perverted by a belief

(7) Ammian. Marcel. Lib. 25.

belief in magic. (8) He admired the credulous Jamblichus ſo much, that he compares him to Plato. (9) He thought that the rays of the ſun were acts of the Divine mind: he prays to the ſun in one place, (10) to the mother of the Gods in another. (11) When he was going to ſend a letter to the empreſs Euſebia, he prayed the Gods to tell him by night, whether he ſhould ſend it; and they anſwered, that it would be death to him if he did. Again, Jupiter gave him a ſign on his prayer. (12) He ſays that Eſculapius often cured him when he was ſick: yet this man has been called the Philoſophic Julian. Porphyr was a mere viſionary. (13) He thought that all who drew near the Gods ſhould abſtain from animals, leſt the impure ſoul of the brute ſhould poſſeſs the man. (14) He would have them eat the hearts of ſuch creatures as were poſſeſſed with a prophetic ſpirit. (15) He thought the attendant Demon was a part of the ſoul. As he lived under Diocletian, i. e. in the era of martyrs, moſt probably he wrote to pleaſe the emperor. Of all the productions which I have ever read, I conſider thoſe of the latter Platoniſts to be the moſt nonſenſical.

What ſhall I ſay of the Sceptics of latter times? Of Voltaire, to whoſe name the epithet of *lying* is now generally annexed? The Abbe Nonotte has filled two duodecimos with his errors. (16) He affects to believe Ovid's Metamorphoſes, and ſtories of Egyptian prieſts, which it is exceedingly

(8) Oratio 4. (9) Ib. (10) Oratio 5. (11) Epiſt. ad pop. Athenien. (12) Cyril ad Jul Lib. 7. (13) Jamb. de Myſteriis. (14) Porp. de Abſtin. (15) Epiſ. ad Anebonem. (16) Hamil. Coaſt of Antrim.

ceedingly probable the writers themſelves did not believe; no nation certainly. After this it is not wonderful, that even Mr. Gibbon (17) ſhould call him *an intolerable bigot in his own way*. This unfaithfulneſs in profane hiſtory is notorious. The ingenious author of *Modern Europe* ſays, "I have made no uſe of Voltaire, as he is more ſtudious of repreſenting things in a *new* than in a *true* point of view."

The public are pretty certain, that Hume's ſyſtem would have been very different from the preſent, if he had obtained the Moral Philoſophy Chair which he ſought after. His being diſappointed by the Scotch Preſbytery, inſpired him with a hatred for the Clergy, from which the tranſition to irreligion is eaſy. He ſtudiouſly conceals this article in the account which he has given us of his life; for he was his own biographer. It may be neceſſary to inform his admirers, that he arrived at ſo deplorable a degree of ſcepticiſm, as to deny the exiſtence of a material world. His metaphyſics annihilate the univerſe. They who ſwallow his religious opinions laugh at theſe. His followers muſt have felt for his vanity which drew him to the court of France, from that philoſophic retreat in which he affected to glory; and his ſilly jeſtings about Charon's boat, towards the termination of his life, muſt have mortified them, as ſhewing a want of elevation of mind. Certainly, Lord Bolingbroke acted more reaſonably, when he returned his laſt farewel to a friend, and ſaid, "God who placed me here will do what he pleaſes with me hereafter. May he bleſs

(17) Decline, &c. vol. 12.

bleſs you." Hume wrote an eſſay upon ſuicide, (it is ſaid in favour of it) which has appeared ſince his death. I ſuppoſe it was feared, that if publiſhed among his other works, it would have ſhocked ſuch as had any religion left; and that, therefore, it was more eligible to ſteal them on inſenſibly. Nothing but the enthuſiaſm of friendſhip can apologize for Mr. Adam Smyth's ſaying, that ſuch a man was as perfect as human frailty can admit. I think it more than probable, that, at the hour of his death, he would prefer Newton's chance before Hume's, notwithſtanding this aſſertion.

It is enough to ſay of Bolingbroke, that he was the ſport of violent paſſions during his life; that his works are dictated by faction and blaſted ambition; that the grand jury of Weſtminſter preſented ſome of them as nuiſances; that he deſerted to the Pretender, betraying the conſtitution; that he then deſerted back again, revealing his ſecrets. Lord Cheſterfield, who knew him intimately, concludes his character with this exclamation, "Alas! poor human nature." As to Gibbon, he has confined himſelf chiefly to ſneering. When his poſitions were controverted, he never returned any thing like a manly anſwer. He contented himſelf with ſoothing and flattering Dr. Watſon, and with calling the Doctors Chelſum and Randolph ſtaunch and ſturdy polemics, inſtead of entering fully into the merits of the cauſe: in ſhort, he wiſhes to paſs in the world for a ſecond Lucian. He reckons Voltaire an intolerable bigot; and I am certain that an impartial public will conſider himſelf as meriting the ſame appellation, when they read ſuch paſ-

ſages

ſages as theſe in his works. (18) "To a philoſophic eye, the vices of the clergy are far leſs dangerous than their virtues; even in a conqueror or a prieſt, I can ſurprize a word or an action of unaffected humanity."

It is enough to ſay of Toland, Tindal, and the reſt of that herd, that they were heard of only by writing againſt religion. Yet thoſe creatures muſt be called Philoſophers, while Newton and Leibnitz, Locke and Paſcal, Boyle and Bacon, Grotius and Selden, &c. &c. (whoſe immortal labours have humanized the world, and dignified our nature,) muſt paſs for credulous and ſuperſtitious mortals. I believe that the contraſt here is as ſtrong as light and darkneſs; yet how vauntingly do we hear ſome ſpeaking of unbelievers, as if they were the luminaries of the world! How often do they boaſt, that they are delivering the world from bondage and ſhackles; which is juſt the ſame thing as if you heard a man boaſting, that he attempted to break open the gates of a priſon which confined an immenſe number of profligates, thieves, and murderers.

However, the books written by them againſt Chriſtianity, muſt have been, eventually, of great uſe to the thinking part of the laity, (19) when they find that virulent men inſtead of bringing any direct proofs of forgery, only ſay, theſe *might be* forgeries, juſt as one might ſay, *perhaps* Virgil did not write the Eneid. When they find that what has been ſaid againſt the miracles goes to deſtroy the credibility of all teſtimony, and to make men diſtruſt their ſenſes, it is natural for a lay

(18) Decline, &c. vol. 9. (19) Foſter ag. Tindall.

Lay-Chriſtian to reaſon thus, " Certainly, if any thing material could be advanced againſt my religion, men of ſuch determined rancour as they ſeem to be, would not have failed to object to it, and, inſtead of poſſibilities, would have given us poſitive proofs. However, if they had not made the attempt, I might have depended on prieſts for the truth of my religion; but now I depend on the Deiſts alſo." A Lay-Chriſtian will conſider, moreover, that if Chriſtianity could poſſibly be an error, it is the moſt innoxious of all errors; if a ſeduction, it is the moſt happy of ſeductions, becauſe its votary receives the ſame pleaſure as the man ſpoken of by Horace, who ſat delighted, applauding in the empty theatre. Beſides, it teaches the whole of rational Deiſm; but Deiſm excludes many eſſential parts of Chriſtianity; and therefore a Deiſt is in imminent danger. I tremble for him when I read theſe words, " He that believeth not in the Son, ſhall not ſee life—he that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; and he that believeth not ſhall be condemned." St. Paul had continual heavineſs of heart for his unbelieving brethren, knowing what their fate would be. The Pagans are not involved in this danger. " How ſhall they call on him in whom they have not believed; and how ſhall they believe in him of whom they have not heard; and how ſhall they hear without a preacher?" is the reaſoning of Paul. But a Deiſt has no ſuch excuſe. He may endeavour to ſatisfy his mind, by ſaying that he muſt aſſent to things as they ſeem to be; but let him remember, that a thing's appearing in a particular manner to the mind, often depends upon itſelf. *Veritas eſt*

ſages as theſe in his works. (18) "To a philoſophic eye, the vices of the clergy are far leſs dangerous than their virtues; even in a conqueror or a prieſt, I can ſurprize a word or an action of unaffected humanity."

It is enough to ſay of Toland, Tindal, and the reſt of that herd, that they were heard of only by writing againſt religion. Yet thoſe creatures muſt be called Philoſophers, while Newton and Leibnitz, Locke and Paſcal, Boyle and Bacon, Grotius and Selden, &c. &c. (whoſe immortal labours have humanized the world, and dignified our nature,) muſt paſs for credulous and ſuperſtitious mortals. I believe that the contraſt here is as ſtrong as light and darkneſs; yet how vauntingly do we hear ſome ſpeaking of unbelievers, as if they were the luminaries of the world! How often do they boaſt, that they are delivering the world from bondage and ſhackles; which is juſt the ſame thing as if you heard a man boaſting, that he attempted to break open the gates of a priſon which confined an immenſe number of profligates, thieves, and murderers.

However, the books written by them againſt Chriſtianity, muſt have been, eventually, of great uſe to the thinking part of the laity, (19) when they find that virulent men inſtead of bringing any direct proofs of forgery, only ſay, theſe *might be* forgeries, juſt as one might ſay, *perhaps* Virgil did not write the Eneid. When they find that what has been ſaid againſt the miracles goes to deſtroy the credibility of all teſtimony, and to make men diſtruſt their ſenſes, it is natural for a lay

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Lay-Chriſtian to reaſon thus, " Certainly, if any thing material could be advanced againſt my religion, men of ſuch determined rancour as they ſeem to be, would not have failed to object to it, and, inſtead of poſſibilities, would have given us poſitive proofs. However, if they had not made the attempt, I might have depended on prieſts for the truth of my religion; but now I depend on the Deiſts alſo." A Lay-Chriſtian will conſider, moreover, that if Chriſtianity could poſſibly be an error, it is the moſt innoxious of all errors; if a ſeduction, it is the moſt happy of ſeductions, becauſe its votary receives the ſame pleaſure as the man ſpoken of by Horace, who ſat delighted, applauding in the empty theatre. Beſides, it teaches the whole of rational Deiſm; but Deiſm excludes many eſſential parts of Chriſtianity; and therefore a Deiſt is in imminent danger. I tremble for him when I read theſe words, " He that believeth not in the Son, ſhall not ſee life—he that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; and he that believeth not ſhall be condemned." St. Paul had continual heavineſs of heart for his unbelieving brethren, knowing what their fate would be. The Pagans are not involved in this danger. " How ſhall they call on him in whom they have not believed; and how ſhall they believe in him of whom they have not heard; and how ſhall they hear without a preacher?" is the reaſoning of Paul. But a Deiſt has no ſuch excuſe. He may endeavour to ſatisfy his mind, by ſaying that he muſt aſſent to things as they ſeem to be; but let him remember, that a thing's appearing in a particular manner to the mind, often depends upon itſelf. *Veritas eſt*

obvia, ſed requirentibus, ſays Minucius Felix. (20) We have power over the mind's eye, as well as over that of the body, to ſhut it againſt the ſtrongeſt rays of truth, whenever they become painful to us. (21) It is not a man's thinking himſelf right (except he be in a ſtate of invincible ignorance), that will juſtify him; for then good and evil would conſiſt in opinion. Paul ſays, he was a ſinner, becauſe he perſecuted the church; but he did it ignorantly. I doubt not, but that ſome of thoſe who attempted to blow up the king, lords, and commons in parliament aſſembled, thought they were doing God ſervice.

Faith is one of the conditions of the covenant. He who holds it, though interſperſed with errors, may be ſaved ſo as by fire; but according to the terms of the goſpel, a Deiſt has no chance; he has rejected the medium, by which all men are to be ſaved. There is no more uncharitableneſs in telling him this, than there is in telling a man that he is liable to be hanged, if he kills another. It is charity in both caſes. I recommend the following conſideration to his moſt ſerious attention. Any one of us can have almoſt as ſtrong evidence as any one of the Jews could have, who were cotemporary with our Saviour's miracles, for from their nature, no man could have ſeen them all, and therefore each muſt have had but ſuch teſtimony as we have for the greateſt part of them: beſides, we have not their prejudices, nor their danger in believing. Yet how terribly, how ſignally were they puniſhed in

(20) Jenning's Lectures. (21) Bennet's Abridgment, &c.

in the deſtruction of their city! God is no reſpecter of perſons, and conſequently, they who, in thoſe latter days, cavil at eternal wiſdom, are to expect no lenity, when the Son ſhall come, in the glory of his Father, to judge the world.

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